

AN
ESSAY
ON

LOVE and CHARITY:

WHEREIN

Our Saviour's *new* commandment is
seasonably urged upon all the professors
of christianity.

*Being the substance of several sermons on John xiii.
34, 35. preach'd at Ipswich.*

By W. SHEPPARD.

Publish'd at the REQUEST of the hearers.

*As the best physicians are most for strengthening nature,
which is the true curer of diseases, so he that could strengthen
unity and love would soon cure most of the persecutions,
schisms, reproaches, contentions, deceivings, over-reach-
ing, rash-censuring, envy, malice, revenge, and all the
injuries which selfishness causeth in the world.*

Baxter's Pract. Works, Vol. 4. p. 636.

*O felix hominum genus
Si vestros animos amor,
Quo cælum regitur, regat !*

Boetius.

L O N D O N,

Printed for RICHARD FORD at the Angel, and
JOHN MORLEY at the Cross Keys, both in
the Poultry. 1723. [Price One Shilling.]

Y A S E
A N O
TONE AND CHARTER

of christianity.

Being the 10th day of August 1900, at the City of New York, I, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for the State of New York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the original of the same, as the same appears from the records of said Notary.

W. 211 P. P. R. D.



O felix dominus
 Rex
 Rex
 Rex

JOHN MORLEY at the Old Kent Road, London, E.C. 1.

THE
DEDICATION.

TO THE
CONGREGATION *to which I relate.*

My dear friends,

YOU may remember, that when I first preached to you from these Words, *Nov. 5. 1720.* some of you desired, that what you heard might be printed.

On the same succeeding anniversary, 1721. providence called me to deliver the same discourse at *Crutched Friars*, near *Aldgate*, LONDON. My very worthy friend, the pastor of the Congregation there assembled, whose preface is here annexed, with divers others, desir'd also the publication of what they then heard. On the next return of the same ever memorable *Festival*, (viz. *Nov. 5. 1722.*) I once again (by request) insisted on the same words: but the discourse was intirely new (except a brief repetition of the substance of the first sermon) and consisted of the inferences which conclude this tract. I was then reminded of the former request concerning printing.

June 3. 1722. I preached from the same text at *Colchester*, when party heats prevailed in that *Corporation*. Here also I met with a request to publish my discourse.

If I had been able to deny the strength of the argument drawn from the too great seasonableness of such pacifick discourses, I might with good reason have refused to comply with these several requests for the publication of this. But alas! the argument must appear with a melancholy force to all who with a small degree of attention consider our present divisions. It was the

remark of no incurious observer four years ago, that
 "there has not been a season these twenty years so
 "inviting to the writers of peace and union, and so
 "much in want of healing discourses*." It were to
 be wished, that the observation could not *now* be re-
 peated with too much reason.

As divers of you seemed to hear the discourses on
 this text with attention and satisfaction, so I doubt not
 but that you will read what I now put into your hands,
 with the same disposition, considering the great weight,
 and noble nature, as well as seasonableness of the
 subject.

I am further confirmed in the assurance of your kind
 acceptance of what is offered, not only as it is a debt
 paid to your request, but as the doctrine here laid
 down, I am persuaded, is intirely conformable to
 your sentiments, and not wholly abhorrent from your
 practice. For I can truly aver, that I have (to the
 rendering my work and converse amongst you more
 easy and delightful) observ'd in divers of you some
 good degrees of that *catholick* spirit and diffusive chari-
 ty, which is here recommended, and of which very
 little is to be discovered in some religious societies;
 the revival and spreading of which, in this nation, and
 throughout the reformed churches, can alone be the
 foundation and guardian of our prosperity, and glo-
 ry of our religion.

That you may be strengthen'd in the habit, and in-
 crease in the exercise, of this necessary and *god-like* grace,
 till you are transported to the world of love, where, by
 receiving a vast addition, it will constitute your com-
 plete felicity; and that all who bear the name of *Christ*
 may depart from the great and destructive iniquity of
 malice and uncharitableness, is the fervent and inces-
 sant prayer of

Yours in the service of Christ;

Ipswich,
 May 21, 1723.

W. SHEPPARD.

* *Mr. Watts's preface (1719.) to Henry's sermon, entitled, Dis-
 putes reviewed.*

THE
P R E F A C E.

 *THE whole christian doctrine is fitly reduced to the principles and duties of it; what we are to believe upon the testimony of the divine word; and how we are to act in the course of life. I think 'tis peculiar to christianity, that all the former naturally tend to the latter, and are designed to promote it. There are no idle and inoperative principles in the christian religion. Every speculation of sacred truth, and the most sublime doctrines of the gospel revelation, were evidently intended not meerly to exercise our understanding, and entertain our rational powers; but to affect our minds, and influence our lives suitably to them. Indeed their true excellence lies in their practical tendency, and the clearest notions, and justest sentiments of things lose their value when they are ineffectual. The apostle represents it as a doctrine according to godliness, and the truth which is after godliness.*

Upon this account the spirit of the gospel, or the true christian temper is so peculiarly excellent and important. It appears in the whole frame and disposition of the mind, and in the carriage and conduct of the life. Every man really is what is his temper and walk; not what is his profession and name: and a sincere christian is the best man in every capacity and relation, and more excellent than his neighbour. He who lives up to the christian doctrine will be better than any man can be in vertue of any other principles of religion whatsoever; as a wicked christian, for the same reason, is the worst of men; because its principles are more excellent and divine, and better fitted to move the springs of action,*

* This is distinctly represented in the judicious discourses of the christian temper, lately published in 2 Vol. for the use of families, by the reverend Mr. John Evans.

and direct the exercise of them, to raise the mind to an higher degree of excellence, and a nearer resemblance of the original excellence. And whenever 'tis otherwise in fact, as there were always too frequent instances of it in the world; 'tis the fault of the person not of the principles; and argues, upon a just estimate of things, not the weakness and defect of their religion, but their degeneracy and departure from it.

Among the other instances of this excellent temper, that which is here insisted upon, is one of the most distinguishing and considerable. 'Tis an eminent branch of the divine image and nature in the soul of man; comes recommended by the highest circumstances of endearment and authority; is the most comprehensive and lasting of all the christian graces; and peculiarly calculated for the honour of religion, and the good of the world: as the opposite temper is marked in the scriptures with the most hateful characters, and was ever the source of innumerable mischiefs. I shall reckon it a happy omen of a more pure and prosperous state of the christian interest, of a nearer agreement of sentiments, as well as a wider spread, and greater glory and strength, when this noble principle shall revive and flourish in the christian world. And I shall not wonder, if it languish and decline in the mean time, and in proportion to the weakness and decay of it.

The following discourse, upon this subject, was preached some time ago in this city, and was thought, by those who heard it, to have so much of the truly christian spirit, and to be so well fitted to promote it in others, especially in the present circumstance of our affairs; that it would be a good service to publish it. It now appears, after a considerable interval, but with the advantage of large additions, in which the good spirit and ingenuity of the author are very evident. I could not refuse this small respect to so worthy a person, and useful a performance, especially having been one who desired the publication; and heartily wish it may find the acceptance and regard which I sincerely think it well deserves. I shall follow it with earnest desires of the divine blessing, and a happy success.

W. HARRIS.

JOHN



JOHN xiii. 34, 35.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Εντολην καινην διδωμι υμιν, να αγαπατε αλληλους ;
καθως ηγαπησα υμας, να και υμεις αγαπατε αλλη-
λους.

Εν τειω γνωσονται παντες οτι εμοι μαθηται εσε, εαν
αγαπην εχητε εν αλληλοις.

***** S the præceding chapter ended with
our Lord's valedictory discourse to
the Jews, so this, and the three fol-
lowing, contain his farewel sermon
to his disciples. The parting hour
***** was come, as much desired by him *,
as unexpected by them. The utmost his enemies
were to do against him, and all that he was to do for
his friends, on earth, was to be done *quickly* ; even the
next day †.

After supper our Saviour exhibited to his dis-
ciples a surprizing example of humility, and self-de-

* Luke 22. 15.

† John 13. 1, 27.

nial, by washing their feet †; teaching thereby all his followers not to scruple the meanest offices to one another. Especially, by that unparalell'd instance of condescension, the ministers of the gospel are strictly admonish'd not to *love to have the preheminance*; or, to *lord it over God's heritage* ||.

Then follow'd his prediction, that *Judas* should betray him; and the traitor's leaving the room for the accomplishment of it.

After which our Lord begins a discourse suitable to their common condition: to *theirs*, as staying behind to begin the work of preaching the gospel, which he had appointed them, and trained them up for; to his *own*, as leaving them, by compleating his intended design of coming into the world, at his approaching death.

To gain their more willing and serious attention to the important points he was going to speak of, he addresses his disciples with the endearing compellation of *little children*.

He then prosecutes his divine discourse, *speaking as never man spake* **.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

1. *Negatively*. Not *new*, as if the duty was unknown, and there was no obligation of obedience to it, before Christ came in the flesh: no, 'twas a duty from *Adam's* time, in whose heart it was written, as well as from the time of *Moses*: and therefore elsewhere justly called *old* ††, as well as here *new*. But (alas, the mischief that sin brought into the world!), what an early example was there of the breach of it in *Cain*, who carried the hatred of his brother (which may we ever remember for our caution, was for religious respects) to the utmost height, *viz.* his murder.

† John 13. 4, 5, 14. || 3 John, ver. 9. 1 Pet. 5. 3. ** Joh. 7. 46.

†† 1 John 2. 7. 2 John ver. 5.

Not new in regard of institution. But,

2. *Positively*. New in regard of restitution. Because our Saviour rescu'd it from the old corrupt glosses of the *Pharisees*, by a fuller, nobler, and more emphatical exposition. They had narrow'd it to those of their own religion, and descent; and stinted the measure, as well as lessened the objects. Whereas, Christ enlarges both: obliging his disciples to love all mankind; even their enemies*; and to lay down their lives for one another.

New) *i. e.* Extraordinary; the most *admirable*† and excellent of all the rest.

So new is sometimes taken in scripture ||. A new name, a new song, &c. according to the Hebrew idiom; which is much used in the new testament.

New) principally, because urged from a new motive, and enforced by a new example. (*As I have loved you*) being much more express and cogent than the old one (*as thy self*) Levit. 19. 18 §.

'Tis propounded on that new and surprizing ground (a heap of wonders) viz. the son of God's love in taking our nature upon him, and dying in it for the redemption of the world. And so for the incomparable sufficiency of the president 'tis certainly matchless.

I shall enforce the great duty of christian love and charity by several arguments (beginning with those in the text) and conclude with some inferences.

* Mat. 5. 24.

† Neos est qui nuper est natus sive factus. *Kairos* (the word in the text) ita novus est, ut sit etiam admirandus. *Leigh's Crit. Sacr.* in voce *καίρος*.

Pollio & ipse facit nova carmina ———

i. e. Eximia. *Virg. Eclog.* 3. lin. 88.

|| See Isa. 62. 2. Rev. 2. 17. 3. 12. 5. 9. 14. 3. Psal. 33. 3. 40. 3. 96. 1. 98. 1. 144. 9. 149. 1. Isa. 42. 10. Mat. 26. 29.

§ Novum. *Kainon*. Nempe non quod ad rem ipsam, sed quod ad diversam tradendi & observandi illius præcepti formulam. Istud enim [*sicut dilexi vos*] longe expressius est quiddam, quam illud [*sicut teipsum*] vid. 1 *Joan.* 2. 7. *Beza* in loc.

I. ARG. To love one another is Christ's commandment.

Observe, That the mutual love of christians is not merely our Saviour's wish, or advice, or direction, but his peremptory injunction.

As St. Paul saith with regard to the duty of preaching the gospel, so should every professor of christianity think and say with himself, with respect to this duty of charity, "*Necessity is laid upon me to observe it, and wo unto me if I do not* †.

Observe further, Our Lord's fervent importunity in pressing the duty: which is inferr'd, not only from his *commanding* it, but especially from his twice repeating the words of command (*love one another*) in a breath: And twice again a few minutes after: which may intimate, not only the importance and necessity of the duty; but the slowness of his followers to apprehend that importance and necessity; as likewise, the danger of neglecting it.

Christians do, indeed, enjoy the truest and highest kind of freedom. They are under a *perfect law* of glorious liberty*. But they are not left to their own choice, whether they will love, 'tis an habitual part even of our liberty, that *by love we serve one another* ‖.

'Tis an indispensable and universal duty; it binds all persons, in all things, in all places, and at all times.

Perhaps the whole doctrine of christian love may be called a *commandment* (emphatically) in the singular number, to intimate its comprehensiveness, and that it includes all the rest (as indeed it doth) which regard our duty to our neighbour.

Our Saviour asserteth, that as the love of God is the *first and great commandment*, so the love of our neighbour is the *second, and like unto it*. 'Tis highly proba-

† 1 Cor. 9. 16. * Rom. 8. 21. Gal. 5. 1. Jam. 1. 25. 2. 12.

‖ Gal. 5. 13.

ble the *Jews* expected, that in answer to the lawyers trying question (*which is the great commandment in the law?*) he should have pitched upon sacrifices, or circumcision, or the sabbath: but he overlooks them all, and urges these two only as the great duties, upon which *all the law and the prophets* depended ||. The six last commandments (the second table of the law) are but distinct branches of this law of love; which we are to observe towards our neighbour. They are love enlarged; and love is their abridgment.

Common ingenuity would oblige us to hearken, if this were only the advice of a friend, or a brother (in both which relations, Christ stands to us) and shall we not obey the commands of our Saviour, our Master, our King? Obedience is the only sacrifice he demands; and as he has the most undoubted, and the highest right to command, cannot possibly err in requiring, and requires nothing from us but what is for our greatest good; 'tis a debt we owe to his authority, wisdom, and love.

I shall only add, that our Lord turns this command into a dying request, and leaves it with us as his last legacy. *I give unto you*, saith he, in the text. And elsewhere, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, * &c.

Shall we not embrace his gift? Shall we not receive his legacy? Shall not his love in bequeathing, and the value of the bequest, force our acceptance.

II. ARG. 'Tis *Christ's new commandment. i. e. admirably excellent*; which I gave you as one sense of the word.

The apostle *Paul*, who well knew its worth, calls it *a more excellent way* †.

It hath a great intrinsick value; a native, and divine beauty.

|| Mar. 22. 36 — 40. * John 14. 27. † 1 Cor. 12. 31.

As *Plato* said of virtue in general, that, if it could be seen with mortal eyes, it would *excite an admiring, and wonderful love of it*; so may we with equal justice say the same of this particular grace.

As a proof of its great excellency, consider the magnificent and comprehensive titles given to it in Scripture.

Our Saviour saith, that the love of our neighbour is *second*, and *like* to the *first*, and *great* commandment of love of God *. It's called the *fulfilling of the law*; the *end of the commandment* †. It is not only the great principle of christian life, and the compleat exercise of it, but the main design of the evangelical doctrine. Our Saviour expresth the same meaning in other words, when he saith, that *on these two commandments, viz. To love God, and our neighbour* (which is charity in the largest sense) *hang all the law and the prophets* §. i. e. the whole duty of man, required of him in God's word, is comprehended in them. Our Saviour reduceth the ten commandments to two. And the apostle further contracteth these two into one. Where he reckons up *nine* particular fruits of the spirit, *six* of them, (*viz. Love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness*) are comprehended in this grace ||.

The love of God, and our neighbour are but one sort of love, in this sense; the habit is the same, tho' the acts are different. Tho' the material object of our love, in this life, is our neighbour, yet the formal object of our love is God; because all things are reduced to God by love. We love God in our neighbour, and our neighbour in God. As *there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit* ¶, so there are two precepts, and one love.

As love is the *end*, so 'tis the *perfection* of all other acts of obedience. By it we become *perfect*, wanting *nothing* ††; *perfect as our heavenly father is perfect* **.

* Mat. 22. 37, 38, 39. † Rom. 13. 8, 9, 10. I Tim. 1. 5.
 Gal. 5. 14. § Mat. 22. 40. || Gal. 5. 22, 23. ¶ I Cor. 12. 4.
 †† Jam. 1. 4. ** Mat. 5. 48.

i. e. according to the capacity of our natures, in this imperfect state.

'Tis therefore also called the *bond of peace*, and the *bond of perfectness*; (or *unity* §) preserving all true christians in that unity which discord divides, both as to that inward peaceable frame of mind, and external peace in the world, which is the perfection of all the duty, comfort, and safety, attainable on this side heaven.

It hath also the peculiar character of the *fellowship of the Spirit* ¶; because, being his chiefest gift, 'tis a certain mark of his presence in the soul. Light is never disjoined from the sun; and if that noble *quantity*, according to the old; or that *body*, according to the new and true philosophy, subsisted some time without being compacted into that glorious luminary, (as not yet created) the same almighty hand that united them may again separate them. But the holy spirit and charity are indivisible. Wherever it breaths it always kindles the heavenly flame. Its light always produceth this divine warmth. It hath also the ennobling title of the *royal law* affixed to it **, or, the *king's law*, for the same reason as the great road, by which travellers pass safest and easiest, is called (*via regia*) the *king's highway*, (a very antient expression *) being plain, strait, and even, and so opposed to all dangerous, untrodden by-ways, and crooked turnings. This law obliges, and is a common rule for all persons of every condition, and degree, to walk by, and prescribes universal love. Or, it may be called *royal*, because charity is the top and summary of all precepts; the crown and queen of all virtues †. Or (if I may conjecture after others) be-

§ Eph. 4. 3. Colof. 3. 14. *συνδεσμος τῆς τελευτῆς*. The Clement Copy reads [*εὐσῆλος*] Unity. Which reading Beza approves, though he saith, He found it no where else.

¶ Phil. 2. 1.

** James 2. 8.

* *לך הדרך*, Numb. 21. 22.

† Vid. Calv. & Bez. *in loc.*

cause it is the grand and principal law of the great and mighty God, *the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings, and lord of lords* ||; and of Christ, who is exalted to be a prince as well as a Saviour, and is sole king in his own kingdom, the church. The precept is royal, as an obedience to it ennobles our nature, and is an honourable subjection, and royal service to our king. Which-soever exposition we follow, 'tis certain the word ¶ signifies rare, noble, excellent, and perfect; and here must be allowed to signify *a compleat, and most valuable law*. For kings, on account of their high function, and great power, are usually supposed (though with little reason) to possess all desired, and conceivable earthly happiness.

It's excellent in its operations and effects. A bright constellation of which shine together in the apostles words. *Charity envieth not, vaunteth not it self* (marg. *is not rash, & περιπατεῖται*) doth not flatter, is not wavering and inconstant; or is not deceitful; doth not deal roughly or petulantly (the word is of a doubtful signification) §. “*Is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity.*” Besides these negative qualities, charity is excellent on account of its positive effects and operations. *It edifies**; *suffereth long, and is kind, rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things* †.

It's excellent as it giveth being, exercise, and value, to all other graces. The apostle saith, *though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal* ||. q. d. Though zeal mix'd with knowledge tun'd the charming tongue of the preacher; and *Suadela's* ¶

|| 1 Tim. 6. 15.

§ Vid. Bez. in loc.

* 1 Cor. 8. 1.

† 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5, 6, 7. || 1 Cor. 13. 1.

¶ *Suadela was the goddess of eloquence and persuasion.*

graces hung on his lips, which drop'd myrrh and honey §; though all the fountains of argument were open to his discerning eye, and he spoke with *seraphick* strains, yet, if this wonderful talent was exercised for the applause, and not for the service of his hearers; not from a love to Christ, and their souls; this eloquence would be but noise, and of no value*. The Man would be so far from having reason to be *exalted above measure*, that he would have ground for the deepest humiliation and self-abhorrence.

Nor is the matter much mended if he knows much, as well as talks well. Though he *have the gift of prophecy* (can foresee future events) *understand all mysteries*, and *have all knowledge*, divine, as well as human, as far as thought can reach, and the mind receive, yet if the power of charity were not exerted in the soul, he would be but of small account in the esteem of God, how much soever he might have of the *praise of men*, and his own applause.

§ Like old Nestor's; of whom Homer elegantly says,
 Τὸ καὶ ἀπο γλώσσης μελιτὸς γλυκίων ῥεεν αὐδὴ, i. e.
 Whose voice flow'd sweeter than the honey comb.

* Did sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue,
 Than ever man pronounc'd, or angel sung:
 Had I all knowledge, human and divine,
 That thought can reach, or science can define;
 And had I power to give that knowledge birth,
 In all the speeches of the babbling earth:
 Did *Shadrach's* zeal my glowing breast inspire,
 To weary tortures, and rejoice in fire:
 Or had I faith like that which *Israel* saw,
 When *Moses* gave them miracles and law:
 Yet, gracious charity, indulgent guest,
 Were not thy power exerted in my breast;
 Those speeches would send up unheeded pray'r:
 That scorn of life would be but wild despair:
 A tymbal's sound were better than my voice:
 My faith were form: my eloquence were noise.

Out of a paraphrase on 1 Cor. 13. by M. Prior, *second Vol.*
 of his *Poems*, p. 14. Edit. 1721.

If a man have a tow'ring brain, but a groveling soul; is rich in speculation, but poor in the practice of this incomparable grace, he is but the nearer hell than his less-knowing, but more charitable neighbours. Nay, a miraculous faith that could *remove mountains* (which our Saviour pronounceth to be in its power, and therefore here instanced in by the apostle) disjoined from the predominant love of God, and our neighbour, would not be saving. A glowing zeal, that would venture on martyrdom, would be alike unprofitable *. " Faith without charity is but a dead assent. Hope without charity is but like a tympany, the bigger it grows the more dangerous it proves; and the most diffusive almsgiving without love is but a sacrifice to vanity †". And as all the excellencies which a man can be endowed with are worthless and contemptible, without charity; so that motive alone gives a value and lustre to every action.

In a word, all other gifts and graces are like the gold which adorns the temple, but the grace of charity is like the altar which sanctifies the gold.

I shall only add further on this point, that charity is *excellent*, as it is superiour (which indeed may be inferr'd from what has been already said) to all other graces, and of a more transcendent nature. Now † *abideth* (i. e. in this Life) *faith, hope and charity*, faith the apostle, *but the greatest of these is charity* ||.

Though 'tis the effect of faith (*faith worketh by love* §) yet 'tis greater, and nobler, than the cause, in some

* 1 Cor. 13. 2, 3.

§ Burkit on 1 Cor. 13. 2.

† Now (after the whole account is cast up *) *abideth*, i. e. in this life, &c.

|| 1 Cor. 13. ult. ~ § Gal. 5. 6.

* *Complura quidem sunt dona & varia: Sed in hunc scopum tendunt omnia & respiciunt. Manere itaque significat, omnibus subducti, tanquam in calculo supputatorio, summam hanc restare. Calv. in loc.*

respects. 'Tis more visible in its fruits, and influences, which are not so easily concealed. And therefore faith and hope are both tried by it.

'Tis more communicable and diffusive: more beneficial to our fellow-creatures. Faith and hope are confin'd to the Souls in which they have their seat. The just man *lives by his* (own) *faith*** : his brother, yea, his enemy lives by his charity; which respects all; operates upon the whole world, and is bounded by no place or objects. It gives us higher degrees of the divine nature: a more blessed conformity to that God, who is *love*, as I shall presently show.

And (to conclude the comparison) 'tis more lasting. *It never faileth**: *Prophecies* (whether understood of instructions in the church, or predictions of future events) *shall fail*; the former, by the vast enlargement of the understanding, and the state of trial under gospel-light being past; whereby they will become useless: the latter will have an end, by their universal accomplishment. *Tongues shall cease*, and *knowledge vanish away*. Languages, which are now necessary to communicate our thoughts to others, and to receive theirs, for reciprocal advantage, will either wholly cease as needless (the end they at present answer being supply'd in a higher manner) or as to that value, which is now justly put upon them, because of their necessary use. And our present imperfect knowledge, and the painful means of obtaining any good degrees of it, will alike *be done away*. Our improvements will bear a suitable proportion to our enlarged capacities. Our knowledge, in all likelihood, will be intuitive; and as we shall see all things in God, so we shall see him, not as *through a glass darkly*, but *face to face*, and as he is in himself §. *We shall know as we are known*, i. e. as God now knows all his works, by knowing himself; so then by knowing God,

** Hab. 2. 4. Rem. 1. 17. Heb. 10. 38.

* 1 Cor. 13. 8.

§ 1 Cor. 13. 9 — 12.

we shall know every thing else. The beams of God's glory will not then (as now) by a *refraction* from the creatures, enlighten the soul; but his light will shine *directly* on us*. O how will its unclouded blaze surprise, and transport us!

Faith and hope are but preparatory to the future felicity. Charity is an ingredient of it. Faith conquers on earth. Charity triumphs in heaven.

As the ceremonial part of the *Jewish* religion is long since abolish'd; not only the veil of the temple rent, but the temple it self destroy'd; so all the positive institutions of christianity it self will e'er long cease. But when, not only such imperfect worship ceases, but even other graces with which it is offered, and which render it (through Christ) acceptable; when faith shall expire in certainty, and hope be lost in joy, then to love God and our fellow-saints will be the everlasting employment of our glorified natures †.

What can I add further, to shew the excellency of this incomparable grace? It bankrupts rhetorick, and exceeds all the colouring of words. The best commendations it can receive are from it self. It may well stand alone, guarded by its genuine glory. Some,
in

* *Est triplex radius rerum: directus, quo creaturas videmus: refractus, quo creatorem; & reflexus, quo nosmet ipsos. Verulamius de Augm. Scient. l. 3. c. 2.*

† *The following elegant lines being now warm in my own memory, I'm perswaded the charitable reader, after perusal, will either approve or excuse my annexing them here, and recommending them to his.*

Each other gift which God on man bestows,
Its proper bounds, and due restriction knows;
To one fix'd purpose dedicates its power;
And finishing its act, exists no more.
Thus in obedience to what heaven decrees,
Knowledge shall fail, and prophecy shall cease:
But lasting charity's more ample sway,
Nor bound by time, nor subject to decay,
In happy triumph shall for ever live:
And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive.

in a pomp of words, have deck'd lower, and meerly moral virtues with spurious rays, and cast a borrow'd lustre around 'em ; but this divine grace shines brightest in its native charms, and is praised most by those who describe it truest.

III. ARG. *Christ's example should excite you to the practice of this grace.*

(*As I have loved you*) which is repeated soon after, with the same injunction *. *q. d.* " This is the last " and great command, I think fit earnestly to inculcate, *viz.* that as in other points, so especially in " this, you would follow my example, in having your

As through the artists intervening glafs,
Our eye observes the distant planets pass;
A little we discover ; but allow
That more remains unseen, than art can show :
So whilst our mind its knowledge would improve,
(Its feeble rays intent on things above)
High as we may, we lift our reason up,
By faith directed, and confirm'd by hope :
Yet are we able only to survey
Dawnings of beams, and promises of day.
Heav'n's fuller effluence mocks our dazled sight ;
Too great its swiftness, and too strong its light.
But soon the mediate clouds shall be dispel'd :
The sun shall soon be face to face beheld,
In all his robes, with all his glory on,
Seated sublime on his meridian throne.

Then constant faith, and holy hope shall die ;
One lost in certainty, and one in joy :
Whilst thou, more happy pow'r, fair charity,
Triumphant sister, greatest of the three,
Thy office, and thy nature still the same,
Lasting thy lamp, and unconsum'd thy flame,
Shalt still survive —————
Shalt stand before the host of heav'n confest,
For ever blessing, and for ever blest.

Charity. A paraphrase on 1 Cor. 13. by M. Prior, in the 2d Vol. of his Poems, p. 14. Edit. 1721.

* John 15. 12.

“ hearts

“ hearts knit together in the bonds of a free, undissembled affection.

“ The words (*as I have loved you*) are both a motive, and direction to this love; *q. d.* “ seeing your love to one another, cannot equal mine in the matter, viz. The proportion and degree; let it resemble it in the manner, *i. e.* let it be as real and sincere. *As* (*καθως*) is not a note of equality here, but of *similitude*.

How justly, how fitly, did this and all other his commandments proceed from our blessed Saviour’s mouth! when, besides the reason of the thing, he could urge the power of his own example; an example not only absolutely perfect in its kind, but most accommodate to our present state: seeing, with the infirmities of a corruptible nature, he overcame those special temptations, to which we are exposed; and performed those duties which are peculiarly incumbent upon us: as patience in suffering reproaches, and not only forgiving injuries, but returning good for evil, humility, delight, and perseverance in well doing, resignation to God’s will, and the tenderest love, not only to his friends, but his worst enemies; praying for them with his dying breath.

Examples are usually, and not without reason, said to be more powerful than precepts. The latter instruct us in our duty; the former assure us ’tis practicable. They excite our natural ambition to imitation.

(Man is justly call’d *Ζωον μιμητικον*; a creature that is apt to imitate, who will be working after some pattern) they resemble a clear stream, wherein we may not only discover our spots, but wash them off. How great soever the authority of laws may be, examples have a greater force; because a greater suitableness. We find by experience, that it is not so much what commands, as what agrees, which gains upon the affections; which the same experience tells us are the grand springs of action.

Though

Though I shall not urge this argument at the expence of the preceding; yet if you are proof against the former, *viz.* Christ's *command*; I hope his loving *example* will constrain you to follow it.

Let every one of us thus consider with himself. Christ's love was shown to subjects: mine is required to fellow-servants: nay, his was bestowed on enemies; mine is due to brethren: his was a free gift; mine is a just debt: his gave talents and blood; mine can only consist in thoughts, wishes, or words, or, at most and best, pence and bread. His love enriches me; mine leaves my brother poor: I enjoy much mercy, and expect much more: and shall so splendid and cheering a light shine on me, and none reflect from me on my poor brother, who sits in an uncomfortable darkness and solitude? Shall all the water of life run from Christ to me, as that of *Jordan*, into a dead sea, to be lost and buried there? Shall none revive the soul of my poor brother?

Hath Christ reconciled us to God, and shall we not be reconciled to one another? Consider that he assumed human nature, that we might be made *partakers of the divine*, not only by his merit, but example.

IV. ARG. *Love is the distinctive character of all true christians.* (By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.)

Our Saviour, in the name of the disciples, speaks to all the professors of christianity, in all succeeding ages of the church.

He doth not say *by this* men shall guess ye are my disciples, or imagine that ye bear some resemblance to them; or, that ye shall know your selves to be my disciples; or, that the world shall know you to be so by your preaching, and praying, and fasting, and zeal for my honour, and interest: no, these, *separatively*
or

or conjointly, will be no demonstrative tokens.

But “ *by this shall all men, (i. e. all sorts of men, of all nations and religions, degrees, and employments, to whom ye are to preach the gospel, with whom ye converse, and who observe your conduct) know; i. e. have good reason fully to be assured, that ye are my disciples: that ye are the followers of a divine person; one that came down from heaven; while they see you thoroughly acted by so divine and heavenly a principle as love.*” *If ye have love one to another.*

Q. d. “ By this carriage and temper amongst yourselves, ye will be better able to spread my gospel in the world; and more amply and convincingly to display that wisdom from above, which is *peaceable, as well as pure* *. Beholding your meek and loving conversation, men will be the better disposed to hearken to your message, and embrace your doctrine. They will be more fully perswaded, that ye act under my authority, and by my direction, whose life and doctrine have manifested the tenderest compassion, and unbounded charity to mankind. But who will take you to be my servants and followers, if by your mutual hatred and quarrels, you discover a temper the very reverse of mine ?

“ The disciples of *John*, my fore-runner, were indeed distinguish’d by the solitude and austerity of their lives, and the coarseness of their apparel and food. And the *Pharisees* are now known by their broad phylacteries, long robes, long and loud prayers, scrupulous exactness in the observation of the lesser matters of the law (omitting the *τα βαρύτερα*, the weightier) and the traditions of the elders tithing mint, anise, and cummin; they were remarkable for their frequent, stated, and accurate washings, proud carriage, loving to be called *Rabbi*, choosing the uppermost seats at feasts, and in the

* Jam. 3. 17.

“synagogues, and shiness of vulgar company*.

“But (however other mens disciples are distinguish’d by their several titles, uncommon habits, trifling, antiquated, superstitious ceremonies; a hot zeal for them, and an affected conversation in other respects) I appoint to you another, a new, and far better distinction, which you must learn, and teach, and practise, as the symbol of my church and religion, and the characteristick of my followers, *viz.* an universal benevolence to all mankind, and a mutual sympathy, and reciprocal affection for one another, manifested in all your words, and deeds.

Such a disposition and behaviour is the richest ornament, as well as noblest difference of the christian; who without love, engraven on his heart, no more deserves the title than a tree or stone, with Christ’s name carv’d upon them.

While many sluggish souls, who indulge a drowzy indolence, and stupid incogitancy, seem well content to sleep in the holes, into which they have crawl’d, dreaming away their lives in an ignoble ease; almost willing as well as deserving to be blotted out of the creation, in which they stand only as insignificant cyphers; let us, my friends, endeavour to increase the number of those, who by their forwardness to excell, discover an inbred desire of distinction, suitable to their natures, answerable to their obligations, and agreeable to the intention of their Creator, in so nobly furnishing them.

The ambition of most, is indeed faulty, both as to the objects and degree. Few strive to be eminent, and fewer *strive lawfully*. They endeavour to reach the top of the hill by a wrong, as well as dangerous path. They trouble others, and hurt themselves, by pushing more eagerly for those posts of dignity and profit, which are the just rewards of vertue in the commonwealth, than by an unwearied industry to possess those

* Mat. 23. 5, 6, 7, 23. Mar. 12. 38, 39. Luk. 11. 42, 43.

endowments, which alone are the proper qualification for them. If they lose their aim, their envy and discontent are remarkable ; if they gain it, they discover those vices, which their former lower station would have still obscur'd.

But there are (God be thanked) some active minds, separated from the vulgar herd, whose pursuits are vigorously continued after things most worthy of their choice, and enjoyment ; and are wisely regulated by the nature of the objects, and their own ; the subordinate law of right reason, and the supreme rule of revelation : who are heartily endeavouring rather to be, than appear to be virtuous : who are as willing to obey, as know their Lord's commands ; and very careful to maintain his honour, and their own character. As they boldly own all the distinctions of their relation to him, so they endeavour with all possible vigour to express them in their lives. Their constant and resolute intention is to behave themselves as *a chosen generation, and peculiar people* * ; and to perform that whole service, which they acknowledge to be so *reasonable* in every part of it †. While they are griev'd and surpriz'd at the great want of faith, and love, they would feign add to the small flock, and distinguish themselves by high degrees of both.

O that there were better evidence, that all of us were of the happy number of these true disciples, I am here characterizing !

May our dearest Saviour know, may we know ourselves, may all men know, that we are *followers of the Lamb*, by the purity and peaceableness of our intentions, and behaviour. Let not our barking and biting discover us to be *grievous wolves in sheeps cloathing, not sparing the very flock*, of which we pretend to be a part.

As charity will lift us up above all the unnecessary and pitiful distinctions, which are the idols of narrow

* 1 Pet. 2. 9. † Rom. 12. 1.

and contracted spirits, so it will be the genuine *criterion* of our discipleship. Here we may distinguish our selves as much as we please, here our natural ambition may soar on its proper wing, *viz.* in a vigorous endeavour to serve and love God, and our neighbour better; and herein to excel all, in the places where we live, and with whom we converse. And hereby we shall give the best proof others can reasonably expect, our selves want, or desire, and Christ demand, that we are not only *almost*, but *altogether* christians*.

Let who will covet riches, and aspire to worldly honours. Let it be our humble ambition to be enriched, and exalted by charity. Then we shall rise as high as the capacity of our natures. (this grace is indeed too great for pride, and too aspiring for ambition :) And then we shall not only be free from envying, but in a condition to pity the possessors of the largest revenues, and those who are dignified with the highest posts; distinguish'd with the most pompous titles; and whose arms glister with all the blaze of heraldry.

Antichrist, who hath wrote his name in characters of blood throughout the world, with a proud humility (*Lucifer's* heart, and *Paul's* stile†) writes himself (*servus servorum Dei*) a servant of the servants of God, while he weilds a sword for their destruction. But *Socrates*, a heathen philosopher, profess sincerely (we find nothing in the account left of his life, contrary to that profession) that *he knew nothing but to love*; stiling himself θεραπευτης ερωτος, a SERVANT OF LOVE. How much rather should a christian take that character upon him, and behave accordingly? *living*, I would desire no other name of distinction; and *dead*, no other inscription on my tomb than (I repeat the sweet sound) θεραπευτης ερωτος, a servant of love, i. e. a servant of God, who is love ||; a servant of Jesus Christ, who, being the express image of his per-

* Acts 26. 28, 29.

† 1 Cor. 9. 19.

|| 1 Jon. 4. 2 16.
son

Son * is altogether *love*, as well as *altogether lovely* †; a servant of the gospel, which is nothing but a compleat and divine system of *love*; a servant of my fellow-creatures, fellow-subjects and countrymen, and my fellow-christians; a servant of my own soul as to its highest obligation and best interest.

I beseech you to consider, that there is far more religion in bridling our tongues ‖; in subduing our passions; mortifying our pride, and covetousness; suppressing our hatred, malice, and envy; sweetning a sour temper; and mending an ill nature; and performing relative duties; than in the stated task of reading the Bible, or good books; hearing and writing, and repeating sermons; singing psalms; and praying in the family; or even in the closet: things which many do out of shame, and fear of the reproach, either of a natural conscience, or their minister, parents, masters, friends and acquaintance; most out of custom and formality, with as little attention, and concern, as profit, or pleasure; few from a right principle, and to a right end, and with true spiritual delight.

Not the strictest observation of all the rituals of instituted worship; no enjoyment of all the external privileges of the gospel; church-membership, and the repeated participation of the ordinance appointed for the remembrance of its founder's dying love, and as a seal of the covenant of grace; not perfect orthodoxy, or the fiercest contention for *the faith once delivered to the saints*, and a most zealous opposition to hereticks, and schismaticks; in a word, not the general good opinion of others, or the highest self-confidence of a man's own salvation, will denote him a true disciple of Christ, without the love of his neighbour.

Though *charity* it self may cover a multitude of *sins* §, yet its own defect cannot be supply'd, or co-

* Heb. 1. 3. † Cant. 5. 16.
12. 1 Pet 4. 8.

‖ Jam. 1. 26.

§ Prov. 10.

vered by the excess of any other vertue.

“ Many, O Lord, have the *praise of men*, and their
 “ own applause, who are abominable in thy sight,
 “ who *searchest the heart*, and *triest the reigns* ; whose
 “ all-seeing eye no darkness can exclude, no subtilties
 “ deceive *!

“ *Blessed Jesus !* how many are calling thee Lord,
 “ who are not doing thy will ! bear thy name ; *pro-*
 “ *phesy in it* † ; and at the same time dishonour it by
 “ discordant practices ; are magnifying thy love to
 “ sinners, and seem assured of their own interest
 “ in it ; but give no proof that it hath warm’d their
 “ hearts with affection to their brethren.

“ They are such, to whom at that day, when the
 “ secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, thou wilt pro-
 “ fess, *I never knew you* : (how much and long soever
 “ they have profess’d to know thee) *depart from me ye*
 “ *that work iniquity* || !

“ When thou shalt appear, how will they stand
 “ in judgment ! how compleatly miserable will they
 “ be in that presence which they will be able, neither
 “ to avoid, or endure ; whom thou shalt find at thy
 “ second coming beating their fellow-servants ! when
 “ thou shalt *fit as a refiner*, thou wilt find them *re-*
 “ *probate silver*, and reject them accordingly §.

These four arguments are contained in the text :
 I now proceed to others.

V. ARG. *Mutual love is highly equitable.*

We expect esteem and love, and every genuine fruit of it from all men ; especially from our fellow-christians. In strict justice and equity, therefore we cannot withhold from others what we expect from them ; seeing the grounds of the reciprocal expectation are

* Psal. 139. 1, 2, 3, 11, 12, 13. Jer. 11. 20. 17. 10. Rev. 2. 23.
 † Mat. 7. 21, 22. || Mat. 7. 23. Rom. 2. 16. § Mal. 3. 2, 3.
 Jer. 6. 30.

equal. We are obliged to *do unto others as we would have them do unto us*, by our Saviour's exprefs command.

What confirms the equity of it, is the confideration of every man's self-insufficiency.

No man is self-fufficient ; but in fome refpect or other, at fome time or other, wants the help of others. The greateft kings are fometimes forc'd to borrow auxiliaries ; and the wifeft to ask counfel of their friends. The frame of our nature calls for concord, and requires mutual affiftance. 'Twas contriv'd by our Creator, to keep us humble by the cleareft evidence of our own insufficiency, and by a fenfe of the general neceffities of mankind, to excite all men to the exercife of univerfal benevolence.

How highly reasonable is it, that our neighbour fhould have the comfort, and profit of the fupport and fupply of our hand, as the fruit of our love ; which our own infirmity and neceffity, may make us fome time or other reasonably request of him ? how juft, how congruous is it, that he who is under a neceffity of borrowing, fhould be free, when he can, to lend ?

The christian's life here is a kind of merchandize, which confifts in a perpetual commerce and exchange of good offices. 'Tis as truly as commonly faid, *one good turn requires another*. This was an undoubted maxim of heathen morality ; which natural light difcover'd and approv'd. *When we have receiv'd a kindness, we fhould prefently think of returning it*, (faith Seneca *.) We are to think of a speedy, as well as fuitable requital. So christianly doth that heathen philofopher argue. Our indigent condition, and the certain continuance of it, during life (I mean our neceffary and conftant dependance in fome meafure on

* Qui gratus futurus eft, ftatim dum accepit, de reddendo cogitat. *Senec. de Benef. lib. 2. cap. 25.*

Non refert beneficiis gratiam, & eft turpe, & apud omnes habetur. — Ideo de ingratis etiam ingrati queruntur, *ib. lib. 3. cap. 1.*

our fellow-creatures) should put us on present disbursements to others, in the same case, that we may have a stock in bank of their obligations to us, which we may hope to have returned, when we shall call it in under trouble, and urgent necessity. This is a wise provision, in fair weather, for a rainy day: a provident hoarding up a good store, during the summer's warmth, of what is necessary to arm us against the pinching cold of winter.

By this means, if our bitterest enemies are not reconciled, we shall raise up no more. And they who are in a lesser degree prejudiced against us, may possibly drop their undue resentments, and have the edge of their hatred and anger rebated; may be softened into a better compliance with reason, and religion. At least, hereby our friends may be secured; and probably increased. Our interest and reputation in the world will be better establish'd; and all just ground of obloquy and reproach removed; which a contrary conduct would afford. Our kind offices to others will lay an easy obligation upon them, and sweetly constrain them, if they have any spark of ingenuity, to treat us handsomely and respectfully, when our circumstances offer them a fair opportunity. Nay perhaps the remembrance of our sincere and fervent regard to their welfare, may excite and encourage them, even to seek with pains for a proper time, and capacity kindly to serve us.

'Tis true, in an ungrateful world, where desert is so often overlook'd, and merit unrewarded, injuries engrav'd on marble, and benefits wrote in the sand, such a conduct will not always be suitably requited; yet nevertheless the obligation to the duty is not hereby vacated, or diminish'd; but hath a proper force from the present argument.

'Tis enough for us, that by such a method we may probably, and in some measure, attain the end mentioned. This is certain, that by it we maintain the character of good christians, in obeying the command,
and

and following the example of our Lord and Master; each of which, (as you have already heard) have the most binding force; and that we shew our selves mindful of his heavenly doctrine. *That 'tis more blessed to give than to receive* *; securely leaving the issue of this matter, as well as of all others that concern us, and the course of the whole world, to that wise, and good providence that rules over all; and which can not only dispose our friends to remember us, and fill their breasts with grateful resentments of our kindness, but can *turn the hearts of the children of men*, in whose hands they are, *even as the rivers of water*, and make our enemies to be at peace with us, if our ways please him †.

VI. ARG. *The great benefit, kingdoms, towns, churches, families, and all sorts of societies, receive from a sincere and diffusive love; and the mischief they suffer from hatred and strife, ought to be a weighty argument with every considering mind, to promote it with all their might.*

'Tis to avoid the inconveniencies and miseries of solitude that individuals associate themselves, and combine into one body. This is the original of kingdoms, and cities, and of numberless lesser communities of men, of all nations, degrees, and occupations, into which they have voluntarily coalesc'd, with some order and government for their mutual profit and pleasure. Every one adding security and advantage to, as well as receiving it from the society into which he is embodied; all, like bees, gathering honey, and bringing it to the common hive.

It being plain, that the safety of the whole body depends upon the welfare of each part of which it consists, and (*vice versâ*) the safety of each part upon the welfare of the whole, which comprehends

* Acts 20. 35.

† Prov. 21. 1. 16. 7.

them all, the original of the obligation of every part to promote the good of the whole, and of every part, from the law and duty of self-preservation, is equally apparent.

Now 'tis very evident not only to reason, but sense, and all the constant experience of the whole world, in all ages, that nothing can do this but agreement and unity *. Unity, I say, not of judgment, which is unnecessary, but of affection: agreement, not in speculation, but practice: *i. e.* the discovery of a practical charity in doing good to each other continually, as capacity, and opportunity enable.

All other methods to advance the flourishing condition of communities, have been tried in a thousand places, a thousand times over, and have prov'd of no value, because of no efficacy. Toleration, love and mutual forbearance, are the only proper remedies to relieve them under their distractions, and disastrous confusions.

A few centuries after the appearance of christianity in the world, its beautiful face was scratch'd, and deform'd by the harpy claws of raging discord †. The spouse of Christ was the reverse of what she will be at last, even full of spots and wrinkles, answering Job's

* See a late valuable tract, entitled *Irenicum, or a review of some late controversies, &c.* by Benj. Bennet, prop. V. p. 28 — 49. where you will find this assertion well proved. See *ib.* prop. X. p. 99 — 113.

† The first council of Nice was called by the emperor **CONSTANTINE the Great**, Anno 325. to settle the time of keeping Easter, and the doctrine of the trinity, which had occasioned general and fierce debates. Their violent insorcing the observation of the former at a precise time, and advancing unscriptural distinctions concerning the latter, which with the like heat they obliged others to subscribe, greatly serv'd the cause both of truth and peace. Ten years after the council of Jerusalem condemn'd and banish'd Athanasius, and approv'd a creed propos'd by Arius, whose opinions afterwards in the reigns of Constantius and Valens, were generally reputed orthodox, having most votes, and the power of the secular arm to support their credit.

complaint of himself ||. *Her strength was devoured by strangers* (to her doctrine and temper) and she had not only *here and there*, but almost every where, grey hairs, and hardly knew it; certainly was not sufficiently sensible of it §. Then the tongue, though a *little member*, boasted great things; appeared, indeed, to be a fire, a world of iniquity, to set on fire the whole course of nature, and to be it self set on fire of hell. How untameable, what an unruly evil, how full of deadly poison then was it? Out of the same mouth proceeded blessing and cursing. The same fountain sent forth sweet water and bitter. There was bitter envying, and strife in the heart, vain glory, and lying against the truth; an earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom, confusion, and every evil work*, viz. mutual furious charges of heresy and schism, anathema's, excommunications, confiscations, banishments, mobs, riots, burnings, and slaughters.

The (*fons mali*) the spring of all this mischief, was not merely the difference of opinion concerning that awful and mysterious doctrine (which now creates so much disturbance amongst us) of the unity, and distinction of the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, in the *Godhead*; and the various unscriptural terms used in the explication of the doctrine: 'twas not one little letter (the *Iota* alone) that widen'd the breach to such a degree between the *Homo-ousians* and the *Homoi-ousians*, (*i. e.* those who held the nature of the Son to be of the same kind, and those who believ'd it to be only of a like kind with *God the Father's*) so miserably disquieted the church, and so wofully rent the seamless coat of Christ, and exposed his mystical body naked and wounded, (as his natural body was before on the cross) a spectacle to earth and heaven, and to the joy of hell: 'twas not, I say, the different sentiments of *Athanasius* and *Arius*, and others, and their respective disciples, concerning the nature of *Christ*, and the nature and procession of the *Holy Spirit*, whether from

|| Job 15. 8. § Hof. 7. 9. * Jam. 3. 5 — 16.

the Father and the Son, or from the Father alone, (a matter much disputed between the *Greek* and *Latin* churches) or the different opinions, and consequent practices, as to that celebrated and trifling controversy concerning the time of the observation of *Easter*, which so long and wofully divided the eastern and western churches; 'twas not, I say, any, or all of these different and opposite notions, which, absolutely considered, in their own nature, made christendom a theatre, or bear-garden, where so many prizes were fought in religion, and a slaughter-house, where there was such a *confused noise*, and so many *garments rolled in blood* †, till christianity stood a tip-toe, ready to pass into some unknown world; no, but 'twas want of mutual forbearance under that diversity of judgment in religious matters; which, though more reasonable, yet is generally less allowed, and practised than in civil affairs.

'Twas casting personal reflections, and mingling human passions with divine zeal. 'Twas not merely *oppositions of science* (I mean, one man's confronting his learning and knowledge with anothers, and endeavouring to overthrow it) in the abstrusest, and most unintelligible points, with regard to which (especially as it forsook *revelation*) it was certainly *falsely so called*; but a venting that opposition, not only in *profane and vain babblings* ‖, over-nice criticisms, and senseless logomachies, but in impious scoffs, groundless surmises, bitter reproaches, and *cruel mockings*, flaming anger, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, the detestable fruits of a *zeal not according to knowledge*. They erred not only *concerning faith* *, but love also. There was not only the writers ignorance of his own meaning, sometimes, as well as often of his adversary's, and so a fighting in the dark; a flinging dust in one another's eyes, by using words without determinate, often with *different*, sometimes with contrary

† Isa. 9. 5.

‖ 1 Tim. 6. 20.

* 1 Tim. 6. 21.

ideas affix'd to them ; egregious trifling with logical quibbles, and philosophical subtilties ; a settling the articles of the christian faith out of heathen philosophers, *Aristotle, Plato, &c.* an affectation to be wise *above what is written*, whereby counsel was darken'd by words without knowledge † ; but there was a seeking some ecclesiastical preferment, a Bishoprick ; &c. or victory, rather than the mind of God in his word, the honour of the gospel, and the peace of the church, at the same time that there was a retreating to impregnable metaphysical fastnesses, and there defying truth, and their adversaries. 'Twas *Diotrephism* ; a loving to have the pre-eminence ; a lust of dominion, pride, and arrogance : a lording it over God's heritage : an open invasion of his unalienable prerogative over conscience.

'Twas not merely an attempting to explain things inexplicable in their own nature, by the dint of meer reason, and (which is strange) acknowledged to be so ; but indirect, rash, and unchristian methods to engage others to *subscribe* those human explications, and then a raging against the refusers (I speak as to both parties) who either dis-believ'd the doctrines, or would not own the authority of the imposers, or thought a subscription inexpedient to promote truth, derogatory to revelation, and the sufficiency of the scriptures, and unseasonable ; as well as inconsistent with their christian liberty, bequeathed them by their Lord, and in which they were resolved to *stand fast*.

In a word, 'twas either gross ignorance of the gospel-rule of behaviour as to difference of opinion amongst christians, or a stifling conviction, and a bold violation of it against the clearest light, and brightest evidence. 'Twas a shameful forgetfulness, or a more guilty neglect of the example of our Saviour and his apostles, who through the whole of their conduct, in planting and propagating christianity in the world,

† Job 38. 2.

never discovered the least inclination to impose its doctrines or duties on the consciences of men, by the least degree of violence; much less by such sanguinary methods as were then in vogue, and used without any remorse.

By such sparks were those consuming flames kindled, which burn'd far and wide throughout all christendom. *The holy cities became a wilderness, Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. The holy and beautiful houses, where God's people praised him, were burnt up with fire, and all their pleasant things laid waste* *. The northern and western churches and nations were overflowed by an inundation of *Goths and Vandals*. And the eastern and southern christians were invaded by the *Saracens*; whose power, by their dispossession, and destruction, extended from beyond *Babylon and Arabia*, unto *Barbary and Spain*; where they met the northern *Barbarians*. In many afflictions God preserved his people. But when this royal law was so entirely, and generally broken, the shepherds were smitten, and the sheep were scattered. The candlesticks were removed out of their places. The seven churches of *Asia* lost, not only their credit, but their name; and the very ruins of many celebrated places of publick worship were destroyed.

How many christian churches have been thus entirely swallowed up by the *Turkish Empire*? In how many wide provinces is the true Messiah renounced, and an impostor owned and submitted to in his room? The CRESCENT hath supplanted the CROSS.

If the *Hereticks and Innovators* had broach'd their notions with modesty and humility, and treated those they opposed with that decency and respect due to those who had been long in possession of the current doctrines, and had, at least, authority and the laws on their side, under some of the emperors; and if the orthodox had done the same when the case was altered,

* Isa 64. 10, 11.

and their adversaries bare rule, and the whole christian world was, in a manner, (as in the fourth century) delug'd with *Arianism*, and had defended their doctrines with more good humour, and a prudent well-temper'd zeal, *contending earnestly for the faith*, only with spiritual weapons; and had discovered a greater tenderness for the persons, reputations, estates, and lives of those, against whose errors they were warmly inveighing, much sin, and much mischief, had been prevented on both sides. Yea, the growth of heresy had not been so speedy and general. Fewer had been deceived, fewer harden'd, and more brought off to a sound mind, and sound faith. For as the blood of the martyrs has proved the seed of the church, and truth often prevails and spreads by opposition; so it appears from the history of the church in all ages, that nothing hath more advanced error than the usurpation of a power to suppress it. False doctrines and *heresies* usually take a more advantageous rise, and make a more fatal progress, from the undue mixture of corrupt passions with honest zeal, in the good souls who are eagerly and laudably bent to suppress them: but who are too often so intent upon the end, that they mistake, or overlook the means. So that the impartial observer at the same time applauds their zeal, and laments their folly, in neglecting the most likely method to promote the glorious cause of truth: which, what a pity is it (with grief of heart I speak it) has often suffer'd not a little, by the indiscreet, as well as insufficient vindication of its staunch friends: of which, if it were necessary, I could produce many undeniable instances, both antient and modern.

The same criminal self-love, and pride, and the whole posse of corrupt lusts, and unruly passions, produce the same *wars and fightings* in the state, as in the church *.

* James 4. 1.

Civil and ecclesiastical dissensions and disturbances, though different as to the name, subject, and actors, yet have the same common original. The root is the same, though the fruit is in some respects unlike.

Indeed, the church and the state are usually so link'd together (every member of the church being a subject and member of the state, and every subject of the state deem'd a member of the church, how distinct soever in their own nature, their government, and respective powers, are) that when one is embroiled, the other cannot well be at peace. If the state, perchance, looks with a cold neglect on church-brawls and strifes, yet the church-party will so incessantly and fiercely contend to engross the civil power, and engage the secular arm on their side, that it will be very difficult for it to stand neuter.

If the ship of the commonwealth is not steered by prudent, and moderate pilots, it will be in great danger of splitting on the rocks, and quick-sands of party and faction; or foundring in church-hurricanes, and religious tempests.

In the reign succeeding *Solomon's*, which was the reverse of his for peace and prosperity, how did party strife, and popular discontent, prevail?

The subtilty of *Jeroboam*, (at the head of a numerous and potent faction) improved the knowledge he gained from the *king of wisdom and peace*, to set aside the succession to the crown in his family, by fomenting the murmurs of the people against *Rehoboam*, to the procuring the revolt of ten tribes from the house of *David*; which would have immediately involved the whole nation in a bloody confusion, if *God* had not sent express orders by a prophet, to *Rehoboam*, to disband the army he had raised, *to bring the kingdom again to himself**.

A long succession of wicked and unprosperous princes, must be looked upon as a further consequence of

* 1 Kings 12. 21, 22, 23, 24.

that grand rebellion, (or defection) and the dreadful issue, at last, of all lesser calamities, in that fatal captivity, which dispersed so many thousands of the chosen seed into foreign lands; who were afterwards so separate in interest, counsel, affection, or place, without any government of their own; so devoured and swallowed up by the strangers amongst whom they sojourned; or so moulder'd by the fury of a divine vengeance treading on their heels; or performed so little worth relating, that no records give any satisfactory account what became of them.

If I were but to epitomize the account of the destructive consequences of divisions, in our native country, the day would fail me before I could finish it. And what should I tell you more than what you already know, and have heard a hundred times over? And yet a succinct history of them would little want an apology to candid hearers, seeing the continued insensibility of our danger by our animosities, is equally evident with their ruinous tendency. 'Tis altogether as needless to advise you to look abroad into other nations, where the instances of uproar, havock, and all kinds of misery that they can suffer, are as numerous, and melancholy, as notorious.

Besides what our fathers have told us, of the nation's sheathing its sword in its own bowels, and weltring in its blood, for above seven years together, about the middle of the last century, many of our own eyes have seen these flourishing kingdoms brought to the brink of destruction; and our religion and liberties just sinking, by implacable malice, and the prevalency of persecuting principles, and practices. Yea, within these seven years past they have been abundantly conspicuous in vigorous, but (God be thanked) unsuccessful endeavours to destroy us and our king. *Hell from beneath has been moved* * to shake his throne by the vilest, and most causeless plots and rebellions.

* Isa. 14. 9.

The dire effects of civil discord have never been sufficiently known or fear'd, till felt by us. Whatever party gains the better, the community suffers. A victory on either side is a triumph over it self. As a man who fights his right arm against his left, which soever smarts the most, he himself suffers the pains of both. A foreign war is a great blessing, if compared with a civil one. Intestine divisions are the only fear, and grief of our friends ; the only hope, and reliance of our enemies. They serve their designs, and make us their scorn ; and by weakning our hands render us an easy prey to them : whom if we escape, they make us devour our selves. They provoke God's wrath, and drive his presence from us. And they lay a foundation of much evil to posterity.

Reason and experience confirm what our Saviour's authority infallibly teacheth, *viz.* That *every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation : and every city or house divided against it self, shall not stand**. Which words were spoken by our Lord, in answer to the blasphemous insinuation of the *pharisees*, that he performed his miracles (that of casting out devils not excepted) by the assistance of the *arch-devil* ; and to show that 'twas a conduct inconsistent even with the politicks of hell, to be divided against it self, whose kingdom could not consist without union †.

There are but two ways, by which the several parts of matter in a compacted body may be disunited, and their comely cohesion deformed, *viz.* either by some outward violence ; or inward disorder, occasioned by the springing up of the latent seeds of corruption and dissolution, which is accelerated by their heterogeneous mixture. In like manner, the ruin of all civil and ecclesiastical bodies, proceeds from a double cause, *viz.* either the force of a foreign enemy, or intestine broils. And (may we seriously

* Mat. 12. 25. † ver. 24, 26.

consider it for our caution) they are never more effectually and remedilessly destroyed than by suicide.

The providence of God, if duely followed, in his continued mercy to these kingdoms, by lengthning out our security, and preserving our happy constitution, religion and liberty, calls aloud upon us to cultivate love and charity, and live peaceably one with another. What would be more pleasing to God, honourable and beneficial to our selves, creditable to religion, or more profitable and delightful to our gracious sovereign? This would ease the burden of his royal cares, and mix roses amongst the thorns of his crown. This would still more sweeten his mild and gentle sway. As he resembles the king of *Salem* (the king of peace) this would make his subjects appear as the inhabitants of that city, more like to, and more worthy of such a king; by attempering their own minds to his.

This would enable him yet still more securely to deride, or pity delirious rebels, and viperous traitors, in their vain efforts to sully his glory, or disturb his tranquillity. O that with a general peace abroad, a spirit of peace and universal charity might prevail at home, and over-spread *Great-Britain*, and *Ireland*!

O that we may not still go on to bite and devour one another, least the dismal consequence be, our being *consumed one of another* *. “ O thou, in whose hands the
“ hearts of the children of men are, and who turnest them
“ as the rivers of water, turn thou us, and we shall be
“ turned †. O that this divine and god-like grace,
“ this heavenly flame warm’d our hearts more! how
“ long shall we dishonour that holy name, which we
“ bear, and walk unworthy of that holy vocation
“ wherewith we are called, by living in wrath, malice,
“ and strife! O Lord, how long shall these ride triumphant, and uncontrol’d over two kingdoms—
“ for EVER? When wilt thou, O prince of peace,

* Gal. 5. 15. † Prov. 21. 1. Jer. 31. 18.

“and God of love, enable us to compose our differences, and heal all our breaches, and cause us with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, to forbear one another in love, keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; putting away all bitterness and clamour, and evil-speaking, being kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as thou for Christ's sake (we hope) hast forgiven us, putting on bowels of mercy, and humbleness of mind*.

“Blessed Saviour! who didst lay down thy life for thy worst enemies; and by thy precious blood didst reconcile heaven and earth, send down thy spirit to inspire us with that wisdom which is pure and peaceable, that all those who agree in the same necessary principles of faith, in the same substantial parts of worship, and in asserting the same indispensable necessity of holiness, may receive one another in love †!

VII. ARG. *Christians should love one another, because the world will hate them.*

As Christ's disciples are obliged to follow his example, so they must expect to share in his sufferings.

Our Saviour gives three reasons why those who love him, will be hated by the world; viz.

Because he *bath chosen them out of the world*: out of hatred to Christ: for his name sake: and because the world knows not the Father, who sent him ||.

What barbarities did the poor christians suffer under the Roman emperors, before Constantine! ever since Christ suffered as an enemy to the establish'd religion, his followers have been hooted at, and hunted like a speckled bird. Their faith and practice have been blindly condemn'd as destructive to the peace of kingdoms; tending to bring on a general confusion; and invert

* Eph. 4. 2, 3, 32, 33. Colos. 3. 12, 13. † See Dr. Bates's works, p. 616. || Mat. 10. 22. Joh. 15. 17, 19, 21. 16. 3. 17. 14, 16.

the order of nature. They are alike injuriously and absurdly accused with the apostles, of *turning the world upside down*, whilst they are animated, as they were, with a holy and forward zeal to plant and propagate the gospel in the world.

Now, if we are of this number, and have earth and hell engaged against us, maligning, and greedily bent to destroy us, shall we not by a firm union put our selves in the best posture of defence we can? let love amongst our selves make some amends for the want of it from them, as well as arm us against their spite and fury.

We are all *pilgrims and strangers* passing through a *great and howling wilderness*. Consider then, that 'tis both uncomfortable, and dangerous for fellow-travellers to *fall out by the way*. Travellers in the *Caravans*, which pass through the deserts of *Arabia*, are very careful not to straggle, but keep together in a body, as their only security against the robbers who frequently attack them. Every one ought to bespeak his fellow-traveller as *Abram* did *Lot*, *let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, for we be brethren* *. We are sojourners in the world; though we cannot be of one mind, let us be of one heart. As kind good-natured travellers let us *bear one another's burdens* †.

Mutinies in an army are always hazardous; but much more so in an enemy's country. It would be a strange prodigy for sheep to worry one another within, while the wolves lie howling about the fold. The case is our own. The church in its militant state is in an enemy's country, as sheep amongst wolves; and therefore, if any had need be of one mind, and one heart, surely God's people had.

They that are born after the flesh will persecute them that are born after the spirit. As it hath been heretofore, in this respect, *even so it is now* ||. If you bear not the name of Christian in vain, you will be *hated*,

* Gen. 13. 8.

† Gal. 6. 2.

|| Gal. 4. 29.

and *despitefully used* *. And the rage of enemies must be born ; but the wounds of friends sink deeper, and usually prove more fatal to the interest of religion. Then it was that *the city sat solitary, and became as a widow that had been full of people, and she that had been great among the nations, and princeſs among the provinces, became tributary, viz. when among all her lovers she had none to comfort her, and all her friends had dealt treacherously with her, and become her enemies* †.

The bitter rancour between the *Lutherans* and *Calve-nists*, and the oppressions the latter have suffer'd from their brethren, against whom, I fear, they have usually showed too much bitterness, have, in a great measure, ruin'd the protestant interest in *Germany*, and paved a way for the illegal encroachments of the enemies of both upon their liberties, and privileges. Some faint attempts we have indeed lately heard of, for a better agreement, but with a success not worth mentioning. (Would to God there were no parallel elsewhere !) And here it is to be observed, that (if we are not misinformed) the principal authors and abettors of those unnatural violences, have been those who pretend to represent *Jesus Christ*, and to be his ambassadors to the world, viz. the preachers (to the eternal scandal of the christian name) who, when the Magistrates, for the most part, would willingly tolerate peaceable dissenters, have incessantly stirred them up with the pretence of duty, and conscience, and *doing God's service* ‡, to fines ; imprisonments ; banishments ; and all the fierce methods of punishment, within the reach of their power.

On the contrary, the agreement of the primitive christians in the first three centuries, when they were not befriended by the supreme powers, which they maintained with the hazard, and oftentimes the loss of their estates, liberties, and lives, was no small security (as well as credit) to christianity, in its infant-state.

* Mat. 5. 44. Acts 14. 5.

† Lam. 1. 2.

‡ John 16. 2.

And

And the example of the *Waldenses*, and *Albigenses*, for divers hundred Years, is highly worth our notice, and imitation ; whose harmony, and close conjunction with one another, were (under Christ) a great preservative of the truth amongst them, in the most corrupted times : and joined to their intrepid courage, and invincible constancy, long employ'd, and at last wearied out the rage of their persecutors.

VIII. ARG. *The lustre of this grace would recommend christianity to Jews, and Heathens, and all sorts of unbelievers ; and by the dimness of it, the glory of christianity is greatly obscured.*

Constant experience tells us that, as the reputation of religion sinks by the animosities of its professors, so charity is a credit to the Gospel, which enjoins it. Which, as it brings us glad tidings of our reconciliation with God, so it gives us the same charge, as *Joseph* did his brethren, when he sent them away out of *Egypt* to his father : *see that ye fall not out by the way* *.

Christ reckons it amongst his spouse's beauties, that *her teeth are like a flock of sheep, whereof every one beareth twins*, which intimates love as well as fruitfulness †.

By our divisions we drive back those, whom by our exhortations we invite to embrace christianity.

The woful divisions of the christian world, and the great confidence wherewith each party maintain their opinions, with fierce revilings, and mutual condemnations, have tempted many to deny, or suspect the truth of christianity it self. And though the agreement of Christians in owning the bible, and appealing to it, for the decision of all their controversies, and the essentials of religion, as to the articles of faith,

* Gen. 45. 24. † Cant. 4. 2.

duties of practice, and the supreme and ultimate object of divine worship; and joining in the principal substantial part of outward publick worship, as prayer, praise, hearing the word, and using the two sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper; and especially their asserting the same indispensable necessity of holiness; and that it is to be attained by divine assistance, in the way of faith, and repentance; though this agreement, I say, ought in reason to lessen the prejudice of unbelievers against *christianity*, and prevent their being so immeasurably scandalized at it; now as it will undoubtedly cut off their plea at the bar of Christ hereafter (add to this consideration, that these persons do not allow the force of such an objection in parallel cases) yet *wo to those by whom the offence comes* *, and who give such a handle to others to *blaspheme that worthy name by which they are called* †.

The *doctor* of the *Gentiles*, the propriety of whose vocation drew him to have a special care of *those without*, tells the *Corinthians*, if *unbelievers* come into your places of worship, and hear you *speak with different tongues*, will they not say that you are mad ||? and certainly when Infidels and profane persons do not only see so many discordant and contrary opinions (but especially so much strife and hatred because of them) in religion, among *christians*, they are not likely to have any appetite to their dainties, but have a plausible excuse for refusing to sit down to meat with them.

Must not a *Jew* be confirmed in his prejudice against *christianity*, and have the veil bound closer upon his eyes, when he reads the representation of the *Messiah's* reign by the prophet *Isaiah* § in such a variety of elegant similitudes, which all plainly import, that then all rapine and violence should cease, and his subjects resemble their king, in being harmless and

* Mat. 18. 7. † Jam. 2. 7. || 1 Cor. 14. 23. § Isa. 11. 6 — 10. 65. 25.

inoffensive ; and finds the very reverse of such a disposition generally prevailing amongst christians ?

I am assured (saith one a few years ago) that a *Turk* who lately heard that precept of our Lord, *but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you** : said, " That he could not believe those excellent commands were any part of the *christian religion*, because he had never seen any thing like it in the practice of *christians*."

O blessed followers of the Lamb ! how are you concerned to wipe off this stain, and to *take away this reproach from Israel* † !

The *Spaniards* are computed by a bishop of their own, an eye-witness of their proceedings, to have destroyed in their conquest of the *West Indies* forty millions. Out of the small island of *Hispaniola*, which was well peopled, I have read, that they rooted out in a short time two millions of men and women. Their lewd conversation amongst themselves, and butcherly carriage to the *Indians*, forced the latter to cry out, " *What manner of God* (with a mischief!) *is that Christ, who hath such wicked sons !*" The history of their slaughters of those poor *ignorants* of *AMERICA*, is horrid and astonishing. The cruelty of their *Inquisition* in their own country, which deserves the same epithets, out of whose clutches, death, the last scene in their tragical process, is a merciful deliverance, is too trite and well known a theme to be insisted on.

It hath been justly said, " That *transubstantiation* is a millstone about the neck of *popery*, which will at length sink it." *PERSECUTION*, I think, we may well say, is another, which will effectually help to carry it to the bottom ; however, at present, it may seem to secure it. *Shocking cruelty*, and *glaring nonsense*, though they have been long amicably blended in *that religion*, we may venture to prophesy, will in the issue prove its

* Mat. 5. 44.

† 1 Sam. 17. 26.

dead weights, as they are now its main props.

GOD grant that some degrees of both * have not the same effect, and at length prove the bane of a milder and more rational christianity in the *Protestant* world.

Antichrist's, or the Devil's kingdom, is promoted by blood, fire and darkness: and *Mahomet* established the credit of his impostures by the sword. Now the kingdom of our Redeemer, as it was founded, so must be maintained by opposite methods. His laws were not, like *Draco's* † wrote in blood, except in that of the law-giver himself. A terrible and *fiery law* came by *Moses* ‖, but *grace* and peace, as well as *truth*, by *Jesus Christ* §. He was the meek and harmless, as well as spotless *lamb of God*. His perfect purity, as well as high majesty, by adding invaluable worth to his sufferings, purchased happiness for his followers; and the example of his love, shows them the path they must tread in their way to it. And this they must show to others, if they would have their company. For 'tis a very powerful motive to persuade them who are wandering to come into it. When this light of love shines in our conversation before men, seeing the good works proceeding from it, they will be excited to glorify our father which is in heaven *, and approve of that gospel which his Son brought into the world.

The *Atheist* and profess'd *Infidel* doth not hurt religion so much as the *hypocritical pretender*. As the former doth not, *can not*, always believe himself, so the sense of a Deity hath so generally and strongly possess'd the minds of men, that he oftentimes makes but few converts, either by his arguments or example. But the *nominal christian* is a *real* and very dangerous enemy to his profession. His conduct is exactly suited to blast

* Penal laws and tests; the extravagant church-power some pretend to; real sacrifice; proper altar; authoritative absolution, &c.

† An antient law-giver of Athens; whose laws were so severe that Solon abolished all of them, except those against murder.

‖ Deut. 33. 2. § John 1. 17. Acts 10. 36. Rev. 1. 4.

* Mar. 5. 16.

its credit, and undermine its foundation. Christianity, like its author, is betrayed with a kiss, and lies bleeding of the wounds it receives *in the house of its pretended friends*. The shaft that pierceth to its heart is plumed with its own feathers. When earth and hell were armed against it, and the inveterate malice, and inextinguishable rage of *Heathen EMPERORS*, urged them to use all their subtle arts and unbounded power to destroy it. Though it suffered in its professors, it flourished in its purity; and came rather refined than sullied out of the fire of persecution. But when they, who espouse the name, deny the thing, either ignorantly, or maliciously betray it, by practices utterly inconsistent with its essential principles; how doth its interest sink, and its glory fade in the world! what a melancholy prospect must all the sincere lovers of it entertain of its approaching ruin!

The prevalence of this divine grace amongst the primitive christians, had certainly a great influence on their observers; and was a great means of procuring their better opinion and more favourable regard. In the earliest times we read, that their *having all things common, and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and the multitude of them that believed, being of one heart and one soul* (words expressive of an endeared intimacy, and fervent affection) procured them great favour *with all the people*, and brought great grace upon them all*. i. e. They were approved and accepted by men, as well as God; and their outward loving behaviour in word and deed, discovered the fountain of divine grace in their souls from whence it flowed.

Afterwards, when *they who were without* observed the sympathy and tenderness of christians for each other, manifested by their mutual compellation of brethren and sisters; their *αγαπαι*, love-feasts, and holy kisses†, they could not but admire them in that

* Acts. 2. 44, 46. 4. 32, 33. † Rom. 16. 16. 1 Cor. 16. 20.
2 Cor. 13. 12. 1 Pet. 5. 14.

well known phrase, (*See how they love !*) and be inclined to think and report that the *GOD of love* was in (or amongst *) *them of a truth*; and that a religion so loving must needs flow from the fountain of love.

That the aspect of *christianity* would not only be less amiable and attractive by the dissension of its professors, but offensive, and create prejudices in the minds of men against it, yea, strongly tempt the world to *infidelity*, is the plain meaning of that petition of our blessed Lord, that *they all might be one, as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world might believe that thou hast sent me* ||: implying, that divisions amongst his disciples might breed suspicion of the gospel in the hearts of men, as if that great mystery of redemption by him, were but a well devised fable, and himself an impostor §.

When so many are doing what they can to bury Christ's honour in the dust, let us, *my friends*, not only pray and sigh for its resurrection, but do whatever else we can to promote it. At least, let not the easy, probable method of a kind behaviour to one another, be any of the neglected means.

How can we expect that the kingdom of the prince of darkness should be weaken'd, whilst we are so madly casting about fire-brands, arrows and death, out of his own artillery, not only to the *deceiving*, but destroying our neighbour*.

* 1 Cor. 14. 25. *εν υμιν*, which may be translated, according to the different acceptation of the particle *εν*, either in, or amongst, or with you.

|| John 17. 21.

§ See the late excellent Mr. Howe's preface to his two sermons of the Carnality of religious contention, page 17, 18. The serious perusal of which, I earnestly recommend to all the fierce party-disputants about religious matters, who are apt to think that the very subject of their debates (because holy) sanctifies their unhallowed zeal; and are hardly brought to acknowledge in any degree (at least not till the fray is over; if it ever is) those impure passions, which to the peaceable stander-by, so plainly appear to glow in their breasts.

* Prov. 26. 18, 19.

I add in the close of this head, that though the broils and contentions of the differing parties of *Christianity*, are their absurd crimes, and derive a great guilt upon them, (especially the *Coryphæi*, the trumpeters, and leaders of the several detachments) and procure *Christianity* an ill name in the world, that yet they may be also looked upon as the judgments of God, by withdrawing the influence of his grace, and the spirit of peace, for their contempt of his love, and presumptuous abuse of the privileges and light of the gospel; it may be, his merciful severities; perhaps also necessary in the design of his providence, and permitted to take place for a time, till they have over-turn'd all their schemes, and reduc'd them to a *chaos*, out of which a regular and beautiful frame of things shall be formed. *The possibers of the earth may strive not only with their maker, but with one another for a while, but e'er long they shall be dash'd in pieces. All the heirs of salvation shall kiss the son, and embrace each other, when he shall be set up as king upon the holy hill of Zion. The rage of Heathens and Christians shall alike cease, and they shall no longer imagine and execute such vain things. Kings shall grow wise and kind; and become the nursing fathers, and Queens the nursing mothers of the church. The judges of the earth shall be instructed to serve the Lord with fear, and one another, and their subjects with love. Swords shall be beat into plough-shares, and spears into pruning hooks. The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more †. The gospel shall arise Phoenix like with fresh and redoubled glory out of its own ashes. All nations must be shaken, and then the desire of all nations shall come, (by power, and in the Spirit;) to whom the gathering of*

† Isa. 55. 9. Psal. 2. 1, 6, 9 — 12. Isa. 2. 4. II. 13.
49. 23.

the people shall be, in order to a submission to his mild and universal monarchy *.

Under our melancholy apprehensions, arising from the present contentions, and deformed state of the churches of Christ, let us comfort one another with these words † ||.

IX. ARG. *The duty of mutual love amongst christians, may be strongly argued from their relation to each other, as fellow-members of the mystical body of Christ.*

The dint of this argument is very powerful, and not to be resisted (one would think) after due con-

* Hag. 2. 7. Gen. 49. 9, 10. Zech. 4. 6. † 1 Thes. 4. 18.

|| *This thought bringing to my remembrance some valuable expressions of that great man (now with God) a little before quoted; I here annex them. The christian reader will not, I believe, after perusal, think that the quotation wants an apology, and therefore I make none. I only beg his excuse for presuming to say, that they exactly express my own mind; and that I hope they do his also.*

“ But this must be effected,” (he is speaking of the union and communion of all visible christians, viz. of such as visibly hold the head, as to the principal credenda and agenda of christianity; and of a particular union amongst protestant dissenters, vigorously, but unsuccessfully attempted in those days, (now no less wanted or desirable) by the good man he is giving a character of, and divers other excellent persons)

“ This must be effected (saith he) as is too apparent, not by meer human endeavour, but by an almighty spirit pour’d forth, which (after we have suffered a while) shall καταλίσσας, put us into joint, and make every joint know its place in the body;

“ 1 Pet. 5. 10. Shall conquer private interests and inclinations, and over-awe mens hearts by the authority of the divine law; which now, how express soever it is, little availeth against such prepossessions. Till then Christianity will be (among us) a languishing, withering thing. When the season comes of such an effusion of the spirit from on high, THERE WILL BE NO PARTIES. And amidst the wilderness desolation that cannot but be, till that season comes, it matters little, and signifies to me scarce ONE STRAW, what party of us is uppermost. The most righteous (as they may be vogue’d) will be but as briars, and scratching thorns; and it is better to suffer by such, than be of them.

Mr. Howe’s funeral sermon for the reverend Mr. Matthew Mead, Anno 1699, p. 54, 55, 56.

sidera-

sideration. I shall endeavour to explain it, and press it home upon your consciences.

What especially calls for our consideration on this point is that discourse of the apostle, *for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member but many**, &c.

The body being great, and Christ the head, the bonds of the union betwixt him and believers must be such as knit them to him, as well as to one another. The bond, on his part, is the spirit; on theirs faith. They have one spirit with Christ, and one spirit with one another †.

One spirit, signifies (if the meaning may be gathered from parallel texts ||) these *two* things.

1. That the members are all animated by the same spirit: as the divers members of the body are by one (individual) Soul. *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.* This is the ground of that peremptory assertion of the apostle, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his* §.

2. That the same spirit distributes (variously as he pleaseth, as to the degrees of donation; to some more, to some less) all the gifts and graces which are to be found in the whole church, taken collectively or distributively, giving them all for the good of the whole church in general, and of every member in particular.

Those words just quoted, — *by one spirit are we all baptized into one body*, &c. may be thus paraphrased.

“ By the influence of the same spirit, and his grace accompanying and following the initiating ordinance of baptism, we have not only become visible members of the universal church of professed christians,

* 1 Cor. 12. 12 — 27. † Eph. 2. 18. 4. 3. || See 1 Cor. 12. 4 — 14. § 1 Cor. 6. 17. Rom. 8. 9.

“ but real living members of the true church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven: and so being united to one another, under Christ the head, become one body, without any pre-eminence (or other distinction) to the *Jews* above the *Gentiles*, or slaves above freemen.” (He alludes to those so called among the *Romans*) “ But as by the several gifts bestowed on them by God, they may contribute more or less to the edification of the church. Of which union and coalition of ours, as our joint participation of the *cup of blessing* (a name given by the *Jews* to a cup of wine, which they solemnly drank in the passover with thanksgiving) in that commemorative ordinance instituted by Christ, is a symbol and witness, so it is sanctify’d for the maintaining and promoting it. And with the sacramental wine significative of the blood of Christ (which was shed for removing the enmity between ourselves as well as between us and God) we drink the true uniting spirit of christian love and communion. The blood of Christ in the worthy observance of that institution infuses into us all one life, and one spirit; as the same blood diffused through the whole body communicates the same life and spirit to every member.

All true saints are more nearly united by this spirit in, and to Christ, than they can possibly be separated by all their doubtful controversies, and unkind divisions.

The Apostle speaks to this purpose elsewhere, *We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another* *. For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread †.

He

* Rom. 12. 5.

† 1 Cor. 10. 17. To this agree the old translation and Tindal’s. But I cannot think it a right version of the words, which stand thus in the original. “ *Ὅτι εἰς ἓν ἄρτον, ἐν σῶμα ὁ πολλοὶ ἐσμεν.*” Which are more plainly, and, I believe, more truly translated. “ Because, “ there

He telleth the *Ephesians*, that they are *built together through the spirit*, for (into* in the original, which denotes the final cause) *an habitation of God*. And *there is one body and one spirit*, even as ye are called †, &c. *q. d.* This is exemplify'd in you, that *there is but one body and one spirit*; for you have been made members of that *one body*, and brought into union with it, or rather into the unity of it, as you become a part thereof. This hath been the cause, this the manner, this the end of your vocation. On this foundation all your experience of grace and comfort, and hope of glory is founded.

He adds, that they were a body not *only or barely* joined, but *FITLY framed*, and *joined together*, (the *Greek* word is the same ‖) *i. e.* placed and disposed according to the gifts of every member, not meerly for the ornament, but the use of the whole. The word signifies being joined as with sinews and bones: for so *αἰμα* is taken *Heb. 4. 12.* and so it is here to be understood: for the apostle speaketh of a body which

“ there is one bread, we who are many, are one body. I do not understand the meaning of being one bread as well as one body, nor the connexion between eating of one bread, and being that one bread we eat of. Where's the reason and aptness of such an inference? all is made easy by acknowledging an ellipsis of *ἐν* before *αἰμα*. I'm almost ashamed to own, that though this passage in the *English* testament long since appear'd to me dark and confus'd, and that I had hardly any determinate notion of its import, I made little enquiry after it, till I met with the following judicious remark “ The words of the “ apostle are mistaken by all the criticks I have seen; *οἱ εἰς* “ *αἰμα*, &c. Because there is one bread, we who are many, are “ one body; and therefore we are one, though many, because “ the bread is one of which we all partake. *Οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἐκ τοῦ* “ *ἐνός αἰμα* *μετέχουμεν*: We partake of Christ the true bread in “ sacramental eating, and become all one body, of which Christ “ is the common head.

The Reverend Mr. W. Harris of self-dedication, p. 92.

* *Eph. 2. 21, 22.* *Εἰς ναον, εἰς καὶ οἰκητηριον.*

† *Eph. 4. 4.*

‖ *Eph. 2. 21.* *ἡ οἰκοδομη συναρμολογουμενη.* *Eph. 4. 16.* *το σωμα συναρμολογουμενον.*

every

every joint supplieth §, as he also useth the word, Colos. 2. 19. The body is knit by joints, and the nourishment is supplied from Christ. And 'tis knit together not only by joints, but by sinews*, which run between every one.

An habitation unto God. These words are an allusion to the temple, which was called the *house of God*. The phrase implies the constancy and fixedness of the union of believers. For that was a settled permanent thing: not itinerant, and ambulatory, like the tabernacle †.

The word (*compact* ||) which follows *fitly joined*, in the same verse, as it expresseth the firmness and closeness of the saints union, so it intimateth also (for that reason) something of *durableness*. Especially considering that this close *compactness*, is in order, not only to edification, but *perfection* §.

§ *Δια τῶν ἀντὶ τῆς ἐνὶ σὺννεύσεως.*

* Colos. 2. 19. *συνδεδωμένον*, bands. The apostle may be reasonably supposed to mean sinews, or nerves, which are ligaments (as they are also properly and commonly called) or bands to the body; tying the several parts of it together.

† The word *κατοικησέτω* (an habitation) is observable to this purpose. For *κατοικεῖν* and *παροικεῖν* differ as *habitare* and *commorari*; to inhabit (or abide) and to sojourn. Though the words do not always occur in authors in this precise, distinct sense. Cicero indeed observes the distinction exactly, when he saith, *natura domicilium nobis non habitandi, sed commorandi dedit.*

|| *συμβιβάζοντες.*

§ Eph. 4. 12. *προς καταρτισμόν*, for the perfecting; *ad consummationem*, Vulg. *ad instaurationem*, Erasmi. *ad concinnationem integram*. Bez. more elegantly and accurately, according to the strict and peculiar acceptation of the word, which is used by physicians to signify the setting (in modern English) of a bone or limb after a fracture, or dislocation. In which sense the apostle seems to use it metaphorically, Gal. 6. 1. If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one, &c. *καταρτίσετε*, reconcinnate, id est, nitimini dum quasi luxatum membrum suo loco reponere, & adaptando rursum compingere. Bez. The same word occurs, 1 Cor. 1. 10. which our version renders properly enough by the help of two words, be perfectly joined together.

Through the spirit) i. e. the spirit sanctifies or makes them saints, and so fit matter for this building. From the spirit they receive their proper figure, and due situation in the body. Considered as beams, or pillars, they are hewn into a proper form, and have shape and strength, given to fit them for their position in that part of the house, which the master-builder shall assign them. Considered as members of the body, from the spirit they receive all their gifts, and that *energ* * (as the original word is) through which every part supplies nourishment to others.

'Tis for this reason that the apostle saith you are the body of Christ and members in *particular* †. *Q. d.* first of Christ, and then of one another. As you are particular members of the one body of the catholick church dispersed throughout the world, you are obliged not only to the proper work of your own particular office (which may indeed be the primary || sense of the words, and more agreeable than any other to the context precedent and subsequent) but to the service of each member, not only for the use of the whole body, but its own private advantage, considered apart, and as far as the profit arising from your kindness and care can be private and *particular*.

In another place he saith, *let us consider one another to provoke unto love* §. *Consider* expresses the sense of the original word a little too weakly, which is strong and emphatical. *Q. d.* Let us *accurately* consider, and *closely* inspect and *observe* one another ¶ (in opposition to

* Eph. 4. 16. κατ' ἐνεργειαν. † 1 Cor. 12. 27. *members for your part*, old version, *ex parte*, or, *particulatim*, Bez.

|| If we take *ex μερὲς* for κατὰ μέρος, as the Syriack and Arabick interpreters do, i. e. every one for himself, singly, for his own peculiar business. Which acceptation of *ex μερὲς*, though very unusual, if not unheard of, yet seems allowable here (if any where) as undeniably suitable to the apostles scope.

§ Heb. 10. 24.

¶ Observemus, καλῶμεν, vulg. consideremus, non satis expresse, hoc quidem loco, Bez. See Dr. Owen on Heb. 3. 1. & in loc.

care-

careless, transient thoughts) that our tender solitude, and diligent regard for each others welfare may be correspondent. *To provoke unto love.* The original is very emphatical. It signifies the heat and violence, the sharp *paroxysm**, (which is the word) of eager and resolute endeavour.

When the apostle had good *tidings* brought him of the *faith and charity* of the *Thessalonians*, he declares his *thanks to God*, and *comfort in all his afflictions*. He adds, very affectionately, *now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord*; and earnestly prays, that they may *increase and abound in love one towards another* †. And how fervently doth he beg (as for his life) for an interest and remembrance in the prayers of the saints, at *Rome*! *Now I beseech you brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God, for me* ||.

That injunction and the obligation to obedience springs from the same fountain, *let no man seek his own*; (i. e. his own only §) *but every man anothers wealth* ¶. *Q. d.* Let no christian be so selfish and stingy, so intent on promoting his own personal, private, profit or pleasure, either bodily and temporal, or spiritual and eternal, as wholly to neglect that of his brother: much less let him do it to his neighbours manifest prejudice. Though we are not obliged in the use of our christian liberty to omit our own ease and satisfaction; yet while we are gratifying our selves we should regard the edification and salvation of others.

The duty and suitableness, not only of mutual forbearance, but the tenderest love and *care for each*

* Εἰς παροξυσμόν. Παροξυσμός contentionis ardorem significat. *Calv.* in loc. ut nos *acuamus* ad charitatem, *Bez.*

† 1 Thes. 3. 6, 7, 8, 12. || Rom. 15. 30. See Rom. 1. 12. and Philem. 4, 5, 7.

§ As *Clemens* reads it; adding *μόνον* after *ἐν ἑαυτῷ*.

¶ The original phrase is general and indefinite, *το το ἑαυτοῦ*, That of another. *Quod alterius est.* *Bez. & Vulg.*

other *, resulting from this fellow-membership of all true christians, is so obvious from the scriptural description here given of so dear a relation, and hath been so interwoven with it, that there is no need of a longsome deduction of it in many words.

It's evident from this account that he who loves not his brother loves not himself. For Christians are members not only of Christ but *one of another : bone of bone, and flesh of each others flesh*. And did ever any one yet hate his own flesh ? how unnatural is such an hatred ! I and my brother are integral and similar parts of one body, the bond of whose best state and perfection is charity. Now shall we by its defect in us weaken that bond, and detract from that perfection ? shall we not rather by an undissembled and fervent charity strengthen it what we can ?

Again, this body is compacted, and all the members *fitly* joined, while *love* and *charity* unite them ; but strife and disregard for each others welfare, will disjoint this curious frame, and dash the sweetness of this harmony.

Again, sympathy with each other in our sufferings, a natural and inseparable concomitant of love, is a duty plainly to be inferred from this *fellow-membership*. They are severely threatned for their obduracy, who were at ease when *Zion* was in trouble, and were *not* grieved for the affliction of *Joseph* †. We are to remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them ; and them which suffer adversity, as being our selves also in the body ||, i. e. in the same body of sin and death, and liable to the same miseries of every kind and degree. I add (*in the body*) in another sense, viz. as members of the same mystical body of Christ.

Once more ; on the same foundation is laid the duty of *rejoicing with them that do rejoice*, which is also a branch and token of love. The apostle joins it to that of mutual weeping, just insisted on, mentioning

* 1 Cor. 12. 25.

† Amos 6. 1, 6, 7.

|| Heb. 13. 3.

it as a property of the several members of Christ's body to *rejoice when another is honoured*.

Shall the ear envy the clearness of the eye? or the hands the swiftness of the feet; or the feet the more various activity of the hands*? such a temper is equally unreasonable and pernicious in the *mystical*, as in the *natural* body; *unreasonable*, because every member, as it hath a property and share in, so hath an advantage from the meer function, much more from the super-excelling qualification of any other: *pernicious*, because such a fretting disposition tends to the disturbance and confusion of the whole body. All the members are in danger of being infected by such a temper. And as no contagion is more catching, so none more deadly.

A king of *Israel* esteem'd a *door-keeper's* place in the house of God, as a valuable privilege, and preferable to the secular honours of the men of the world †. Now all believers are the very *temple of the living God*: all are *heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Christ*: all are *first-born*: all are *priests*, and *kings* ‖. What reason then can there be for the meanest member to be dissatisfied with his allotted situation and office in the body, seeing, whatsoever it is, it cannot but be *abundantly* honourable §. No more reason can the upper members have to condemn the lower. Their mutual relation is *alone* sufficient motive to procure mutual esteem and love; and cause them to hearken to the apostles exhortation and direction, *who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons* ¶. Who

* 1 Cor. 12. 15. — 21. † Psal. 84. 10. ‖ 1 Cor. 3. 16, 17.
 2 Cor. 6. 16. Rom. 8. 17. Heb. 12. 23. Numb. 8. 18. Rev.
 1. 5, 6. § 1 Cor. 12. 24. ¶ 1 Cor. 4. 7. Phil. 2. 3. Jam. 2. 1.
 sub-

submitted to the most shameful usage in life, and the most ignominious death, that eternal shame and confusion might not cover us. He humbled himself that he might become our brother, and *is not ashamed to call us brethren* *. And now in his exaltation he still owns us under that character. Nor will he ever be ashamed to acknowledge that near relation to us ; so condescending on his part ; so honourable on ours †.

Joseph in his highest grandeur, when he rode in the second chariot, was set over all the land of Egypt, and had none greater than himself, except Pharaoh only in the throne (to whom he was a father) freely acknowledged poor shepherds for his brethren : yea his bowels yearn'd upon them ||. 'Twas a rule for the kings of *Israel* (whose kingdom was a prefiguration of the kingdom of Christ) that they should not lift up their hearts above their brethren §.

In the primo-primitive times, when the example of Christ was fresh in their remembrance, how cordially did the tallest christians stoop to the terms of love ? *Peter* a chief apostle, to whom the gospel of the circumcision was committed, ranks himself with his inferiors in the church ; who am also an elder. *St. John* writing to the seven churches in *Asia*, saith, *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation* ¶. *Paul*, the great apostle of the Gentiles, to whom the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed ; on whom the burden of all the churches lay ; whose call to the ministry was so extraordinary by Christ's appearing in person to him, from heaven ; by whom he was made a chosen vessel to bear his name, who excelled all the apostles in learning and eloquence, being brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, speaking with tongues more than they all ; and to sum up his eminent privileges, who was caught up to the third heaven, and brought down again to the earth ** (a

* Heb. 2. 11. † Mat. 20. 40. || Gen. 41. 40—44. 42.
 15, 16. 45. 8, 14, 30. § Deut. 17. 20. ¶ Gal. 2. 7. 1 Pet.
 5. 1. Rev. 1. 9. ** Act 9. 3 --- 7, 15. 22. 3. 1 Cor. 14. 18.
 2 Cor. 12. 2.

favour and honour highly wonderful, and peculiar to himself; never, as we know, bestowed on any of the race of *Adam* (unless on some fictitious saint in a popish legend.) Even this *Paul* joins others to himself as *beloved brethren*, and his *dear fellow-servants*. Nay, he coins a new word, without asking leave of the criticks, to express the mean opinion he had of himself, *as less than the least of all saints* †.

No dignity of station, no degree of authority, no eminency of grace, should make us *set at nought our brother*; or refuse to acknowledge the lowest and weakest christians as our *dear brethren*.

He that loves one saint truly, loves any saint. And therefore the apostle commends the love of the *Colossians* for its universality; that it was to *ALL* the saints*.

He that cannot love grace any where, loves it no where for it self. A wicked man may love a child of God for his profit or credit's sake, for the pleasure of his agreeable society, his amiable qualities, and meerly moral virtues; but to love him for these or any other respects, than because he is a saint, is a meer natural affection, not a spiritual grace; which is to love him as sanctify'd, and *begotten of God*, and for spiritual respects. And thus he who *gives a cup of cold water only to a disciple in the name of a disciple*, (i. e. as he bears the character of a disciple of Christ) *shall in no wise lose his reward* ||.

This great argument which I have been so long upon, might be further enforced from this motive, *viz.* that as Christ's members with himself compose one mystical body, he takes every kindness shown to any member, as done to himself. If so; all the *constraining* arguments for love to him may have a place here §.

† ελαχιστοτερω. Colof. 1. 7. 4. 7.

* Colof. 1. 4. || 1 Joh. 5. 1. Mat. 10. 41, 42.

§ Mat. 25. 40, 45.

X. ARG. CHARITY; *or loving and doing good to others, is exceeding pleasant: but envy, malice, hatred, strife, and the injurious treatment of our neighbour, are very disquieting and tormenting.*

Here at first observe, that meekness and humility, are either the children or handmaids of charity, which are placid, mild, and pleasant graces. There's great satisfaction inherent in them, and annexed to them. *The meek shall eat and be satisfy'd. They shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. They shall increase their joy in the Lord*.* They that learn of Christ to be meek and lowly in heart, shall find rest to their souls †.

Charity necessarily produceth, encreaseth, and secures the tranquility of the mind, because it expels thence, as utterly incompatible with it self, those turbulent passions which rage and tyrannize with such havock in unloving souls, viz. restless ambition; anxious and griping avarice; fretting envy; enflaming wrath; and pricking revenge. When the winds and waves do not blow and roar, the ocean must needs have a smooth surface. *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him,* saith the loving apostle ‖.

Some here understand the original word **SCANDAL** *actively*, q. d. He gives *no occasion of stumbling* to his Brother, by opprobrious language, a vicious example, or injurious treatment. As wisdom avoids snares, so love lays none. Charity will rather abridge it self of a lawful liberty, than by using it offend a weak brother §.

* Psal. 22. 26. 37. 11. Ill. 29. 19. † Mat. 11. 29.

‖ 1 John 2. 10. *Σκανδαλον εν αυτω ουκ εστιν.* There is no scandal in him.

§ Rom. 13. 10. 14. 15. 1 Cor. 13. 5.

Others interpret it *passively*, q. d. There is no *scandal*, or *occasion of stumbling*, given to him by others, so as to be taken by him. Laying an emphasis on the particle (*εἰ*) in (*εἰ αὐτῷ*) in him. They may lay blocks in his way, but he falls not at them. 'Tis his glory to pass over a transgression †. He acts agreeably to that part of St. Paul's character of charity, *it suffereth long, is not easily provoked, beareth all things* ‖. Love covereth a multitude of sins §; as from others by concealment, so from the lover by connivance and forgiveness. By which method great trouble is avoided, and much inward peace secured.

There are three sorts of *scandals*.

Given, but not taken, which hurt and disquiet only the giver.

Taken, but not given, which render only the receiver guilty.

Both given and taken, hereby each party is injured; and hath matter of shame and sorrow.

There is another larger interpretation of the words, which by *scandal* understands *transgressions*; a man's own sins, that are *scandalous* and injurious to his brother. Such are happily avoided by one who loves him. He is not indeed secured *always*, nor from *all* sin. But he doth not willingly, and ordinarily, fall into those kinds of sins just mentioned; at least, not while he abides in *light* and *love*; and is under the influence and direction of those heaven-born twins*.

If we consider the custom of the apostles in other quotations from the old testament, and the identity of phrase in these words, we may conjecture that the apostle refers to the *Seventy's* reading of the 165th verse of the 119th *Psalms*, *ἐκ εἰς αὐτοῖς σκανδαλον*; (exactly agreeable to the *Hebrew* verity †.) i. e. (*εἰ αὐτοῖς*) if we may supply the particle from the apostle. *There*

† Prov. 19. 11.

‖ 1 Cor. 12. 4, 5, 7.

§ Prov. 10. 12.

i Pet. 4. 8.

* John 11. 9.

† אֵין מַשְׁכָּל לְעַיְנֵהוּ. Et non eis (*est*) offensio. *Pagn. interlin. vers.*

is no scandal (i. e. matter of offence) in them. The meaning of both passages may be, they live inoffensively, and neither stumble themselves, nor give occasion to others to stumble, or fall into sin, by word or deed.

When a man cannot only bear the undeserved displeasure of others, and excuse or forgive it, but even be ready to *heap coals of fire on their head*, by helping, and doing what he can, to please those who have given him real cause of distaste and anger, the voice of conscience must needs speak softly and sweetly. There must necessarily ensue a divine calm in the breast, which no similitude drawn from earthly things can adequately represent; but which is it self not only an emblem of heaven, but the very foretaste of that serenity of soul which is the happiness of *the spirits of just men made perfect*.

The satisfaction afforded by the bond of civil amity to the parties link'd in it, must certainly be very delightful. They who understand the true secret of friendship, and have souls formed for it, feel it very exquisite. They relish its sweets with rapture. But how great soever the difference may be between the idle amusement of a common acquaintance, and the refined endearments of an intimate friendship, the pleasure felt in the intercourse of holy souls, who are members of the same mystical body, and who are engaged in all the duties resulting from that relation, by strength derived from their common head of influence and government, must needs be proportionably greater, (as the relation is of a higher and far nobler nature) and afford peculiar transports; to which the purest delights of a meer human love, are not to be compared; and of which they must necessarily be very imperfect adumbrations.

For brethren to dwell together in unity, *O how good, O how pleasant* is it? above expression, above thought. The psalmist intimates the pleasure and profit of such an unity by two elegant similitudes. My present argument

gument obliges me to take notice only of the first. *It's like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments* *.

The *precious ointment* was a very rich and curious composition of the most grateful perfumes, and principal aromattick spices, and oil-olive, according to God's own immediate direction, called *an oil of holy ointment*, or, *an holy anointing oil*, which was not, upon the severest penalty, to be imitated, or put to a profane use †.

The excellencies of Christ, the discoveries of his person and love, his promises, and offers of life and salvation, and the suitableness of his several offices in the great work of redemption, the communication of all that he is and has to believers, the spouse seems to hold forth in those words of applause and affection, *because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee* ||. Oil makes the face to shine, i. e. look pleasant; and therefore is called the *oil of gladness* §. The psalmist in those expressions, and elsewhere, alludes to the custom of the Jews, of anointing their faces with oil at solemn festivals and times of publick rejoicing. Thus the metaphor aptly expresses the intenseness of the pleasure of unity. And by the ointment's *running down upon the beard*, &c. is aptly denoted the diffusiveness of the joy, and the share the inferior members of the brotherhood have in it, as well as the superior.

Revenge; indeed, lays claims to pleasure; and has an old *Latin* verse to justify it, which says,

Revenge more pleasant is than life it self *.

But how groundless is the assertion; especially as to the general terms in which 'tis laid down! nothing is,

* Psal. 132. 1, 2. † Exod. 30. 23 — 38. || Cant. 1. 3.

§ Psal. 104. 15. 45. 7. 23. 5.

* Est vindicta bonum vitâ jucundius ipsa.

more evident, from reason and experience, than that revenge either meditated or executed is very disquieting. How doth it hurry and distract the mind! how doth it inflame the soul! the most, or all, that can be said of it with any appearance of truth, is, that to some *devilish* tempers the *execution* of it (though I still deny the least pleasure in the *purpose*) may afford a smart and hasty pang of infernal joy, soon exchang'd for remorse and sadness; a sudden flash of insolent triumph that quickly expires in smoke, and stench, and torment.

The heathen poet, in his fine description of hell, artfully and justly places *revengeful cares* in the entrance of it*. They not only lead to it, but are emblems of it. As *there is no torment in love*†, so there is certainly much in the opposite vice. But to lay aside revenge, and return good-will for hatred, is as great a kindness to our selves as others. We double injuries by resenting them. A quick apprehension of wrong, and a purpose to retaliate, harms us more than the smartest part of the injury it self. Resentment enlivens the malice, which neglect would deaden.

The courage to observe an affront, makes us to be even with an adversary; the goodness to forgive it sets us above him. As a Bee can suck honey out of a flower, which a fly cannot; so a true christian can extract good (the good both of profit and pleasure) out of other mens sins; (can gather *grapes of thorns*, and *figs of thistles*) which surpasses the skill of the worldling. And as he can, so he ought to exercise this noble and delightful *chymistry*. By forgiveness we may possibly conquer our enemy; however, we shall certainly gain a nobler conquest over our selves. By malice and hatred we make work for repentance, which hath bitterness and sorrow in it; by love and forbearance we lay a sure foundation for a pleasing reflection.

* Vestibulum ante ipsum, primisque in faucibus orci,
Luctus, & ultrices posuere cubilia curæ.

Virg. *Æn. lib. 6.*

† 1 John 4. 18.

Whether virtue be its own reward or no, vice is certainly its own punishment. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Every lust has a secret sting with its honey. As the corrupt heart tempts, so the guilty conscience torments it self. (The form of the expression (*saith my God*) intimates the undoubted truth of the thing.) *They are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt* *.

Their quarrelsome, furious tempers, while they are distracted with the tumult of their contending passions, will not permit them to enjoy true peace. The constant ebullitions of their wrath and malice; their fretting envy, and discontented murmuring; their ambitious aims and exorbitant desires; (which their irregular and excessive love of the world raises in them;) their going about like their master, imitating his lion-like roaring, while they are seeking their prey, being party-devils in damnation, by tempting others to sin; and, to add no more, their *foaming out their own shame* in all their brutish excesses, makes the comparison very just.

But (to change the scene) how calm and serene is the breast of the peaceable, loving, christian! like the pacifick sea, whose waves are rais'd by no outward blasts, or inward ferment. In which the God of peace dwells as in his own temple. Into which (as the dove brought into the ark the olive-branch, the emblem of peace) the holy dove enters with all its innocence and sweetness, and finds that rest for the sole of its foot, which it in vain sought on the unstable waters of strife. How delightful are the secret and quiet emanations of a christian's common benevolence to all his fellow-creatures, and special complacency in his brethren, *the saints, the excellent in the earth!* he is a publick good. And while he doth good to all, as he *hath opportunity*, he receives no pleasure like that of giving it.

* Isa. 40. 22.

57. 20, 21.

The nature of man must be sunk very low ; his affections must be prodigiously corrupted by the most unnatural and habitual sinful practices, not to take pleasure in pleasing. Though a person take little care to please, yet when by chance, or in a good mood by design he doth please, not to be re-pleas'd, discovers a temper I have no name for ; and therefore leave you to give it one, as you think it deserves. But such a *nameless* temper, is certainly one reason, amongst others, of the perfectly ill-natur'd, and disobliging carriage, we see so common, not only amongst neighbours, and acquaintance, but *pretended* friends ; and too often amongst those who are closely united in the bonds of nature, but give little evidence of their being so, as they ought to be, in those of affection.

I have read of the inhabitants of *Japan*, that they will needs salute by putting off their shoes, because the *Chinese* (whom they hate) use (as we do) to salute by putting off their hats or caps. Thus many love to live in opposition, and to carry it like meer *Antipodes* in all their ways to those they converse with ; which must be as troublesome to themselves, as hurtful to others.

It was part of *Job's* perfection and *uprightness*, and a principal ingredient in his *fear of God*, to avoid this great evil of uncharitableness †. He had pleasure in the review, that he had *caused the widow's heart to sing for joy*, had been *eyes to the blind*, and *feet to the lame*, and *a father to the poor*, and that they had been *warm'd with the fleece of his sheep* ||.

The best manner of answering the end of our creation, complying with the highest obligation of our nature, and most nearly imitating our maker (as I shall presently show) cannot but afford an ample and solid satisfaction §.

Love

† Job i. 1. 29. 12, 13, 15, 16. || Job 30. 13 — 21.

§ Angusta admodum est circa nostra tantum modo commoda lætitiæ materia ; sed eadem est amplissima, si aliorum omnium felicitas cordi nobis sit. Quippe hæc ad illam eandem habebit proportionem,

Love makes our brethren to be to us as our selves ; by which means we esteem their welfare as our own, and equally dear to us. Our joy is the same as if we receiv'd all the good things they partake of. What abundant pleasure then hath the soul in whom this divine grace rules ! The great and constant benefits which so many thousands of his brethren receive from God their daily bountiful benefactor, through the union and power of love he appropriates to himself. And how must this joy be heighten'd, when he himself is made the happy instrument of the conveyance of part of them !

I have heard of a vain and proud person, who liv'd with great pleasure upon the crazy imagination, that all the fine equipages he saw in the streets were his own. But surely he can never want any good thing, or any pleasure, who looks upon all the bounties of providence poured forth into the lap of others, with an appropriative view, as if emptied into his own. Surely he can have but few joyless hours, who can rejoice with all his fellow-christians, and cannot be destitute, or sorrowful, till they all are so.

This is a nobler *alchemy* than the *philosophers by fire* ever yet discovered. This is the *arcanum magnum*, the grand secret in spiritual chymistry. Such a temper is the christians true *white stone* *, (by which he is more happily endowed than *Midas*) which, like the philosopher's fabled one, turns every thing into gold. It accumulates satisfaction by extract, and replenishes the mind with a pleasure far superior to any other on this side heaven, and below the immediate embraces of the deity.

“ O my God ! give me this transmuting temper of
“ soul : and then I will patiently, yea joyfully, wait

portionem, quam habet immensa beatitudo Dei, totiusque humani generis, ad curtam illam fidei felicitatis suppellectilem, quam uni homini, eique invidio, & malevolo, fortunæ bona possint suppeditare. *Cumberland de leg. nat. p. 214.*

* Rev. 2. 17.

“ for

“ for my last and great change. By being so like
 “ unto thee, I’m sure, I shall e’er long be with thee!

I wish I could speak more from my own experience, but believe it, my friends (I’m sure you won’t believe it to your hurt) that as this loving temper is the image of God, so ’tis no other than the gate of heaven. Nay, ’tis heaven anticipated and brought down to earth. The pleasure it brings with it is inconceivable by those who are strangers to it, and unutterable by those whom it transports. In vain doth the scornful voluptuary, or covetous, uncharitable wretch, ask for an account of it. For it hath no alliance with any of the pleasures of sense, in which they alone delight. Nor have they any ideas by which the perception of it may be conveyed to them. Nay, ’tis contrary to all their notions.

To most of you, perhaps, it may seem a strange paradox. However, with your leave, I’ll venture to propose it as an highly probable, if not a certain, truth, that, *There’s a greater pleasure in loving than in being beloved.* Nay, not only simply in being beloved, but (which is much sweeter) in having love returned for love.

When we are only beloved we are passive; and either the unworthiness and imperfection of the lover, or our suspicion of the truth of the love, or the weakness of its degree, or our fears of its short continuance, or some uneasiness arising from a self-consciousness of the want of that merit, which another eye thinks it sees in us, mixed with some pity of them, and sorrow for our selves for the mistake, or a vain effort, while we are satisfied of the reality or greatness of the affection bestowed upon us, to be what we are esteemed, and for which we are beloved; for one, or some, or all of these reasons, *to be loved*, may very indifferently and weakly affect us.

But then, indeed, are we sensibly touch’d, even to the quick; then our whole souls are alarm’d, and gently raised out of their former dreaming insensibility

lity by the sweet voice of pleasure, as one awakened by melodious, soft musick (as *Montaigne*, the famous *French* essayist, tells us, his father took care he should be every morning) when love invades our own breasts, or steals into them; finds, or makes a way to our hearts, before unexperienced, and unrelenting. And when its sallies thence, are active and vigorous upon suitable and worthy objects: Then indeed, I grant (if ever) the pleasure of being beloved (re-loved I should say) may rival, and nearly resemble that of loving. Though I incline to think, it can never equal, much less exceed it.

Concern and tenderness for another is so very pleasing an emotion, because it powerfully stirs that principle of sympathy and affection, which, as a root, still abides in our souls, (not wholly dug up by sin, though render'd unfruitful by it) in a right manner, and calls it forth into exercise in a way agreeable to its nature. As what we do naturally we do most freely, so (for that very reason) most delightfully. There still remains some of this love-fire in our natures, though covered over by the embers of corruption. As they are blown off by the Holy Spirit (the *wind* that *bloweth where it listeth*) it appears, as with a profitable warmth to others, so with a refreshing light to our selves.

A selfish person, void of the sociable passions of the soul (but as such a monster can hardly be supposed, I should rather say, without the exercise of them) loses the top of earthly happiness, the cream of this world's sweetness, the *Haut-goust*, and best relish of life. While he would monopolize all the profits and pleasures of it, forgetting the want of room in his narrow soul for any of them in their truth and extent, *propter vitam vivendi perdit causas*, he loses all things that deserve those names; all the noble purposes and ends of being. He deprives himself of that very thing, which alone makes life it self truly valuable, and for which alone any soul that knows its own nature, and the obligations of it, would wish to live, and move, and

have its being, viz. the capacity of doing good, and the pleasure of pleasing. This is the only innocent sensuality. This is the truest and highest *Epicurism*. It's a nobler fruit than ever grew in the garden of that philosopher, from whom the name is derived. (I fear I speak ARABICK to some of you. I pray God give you *the hearing ear and the understanding heart.*)

" Amongst the many refinements upon pleasure,
 " which this polite age hath produc'd, it is a wonder
 " to me (saith an elegant modern writer) that so few
 " have hit upon this of relieving the poor; (one prin-
 " cipal and essential branch of the grace I am speaking
 " of.) This may sound harsh in the ears of a fine
 " gentleman; but most certain it is, that the least re-
 " flection would furnish him with the same observati-
 " on. Were it possible for such a one to enter into
 " all the dismal circumstances of want, poverty and
 " distress; and to consider how far it may be in his
 " power to remove them, he would be content, per-
 " haps, to part with some of his present enjoyments,
 " or rather to exchange them for those of a more ex-
 " quisite nature *.

" In the work of creation God used no instruments;
 " but in preservation he does; and how delightful
 " (one well saith) must it be, to administer to the di-
 " vine providence, in the preservation of our own
 " kind. Methinks a man ready to perish for hunger,
 " has hardly so pleasant a relish of his food, as he
 " that gives it him.

We ought heartily to pity the covetous, who do not know the pleasure of being charitable.

XI. ARG. LOVE *makes us like God.*

God doth not only love, but *is love*. (*αὐτὸς ἀγαθὸς*) *Amor per essentiam*. Love is his Ef-

* *The Lucubrations of I. B. V. 3. p. 119.*

sence*. He hath it not by a weak and derivative participation. Without it he would not be God. Though in scripture God is often said to be *angry*, and to *hate*; yet he is never said to be *anger* or *hatred*; nor even *justice* it self. In those respects he is always spoken of (*in concreto*) *in the concrete*. But he is expressly said to be love (*in abstracto*) *in the abstract*. Infinite power, and infinite wisdom, without this, would be so far from constituting his nature, that they would make a being quite contrary to what we mean by God. 'Tis this makes him more the object of our affection than our fear. This bends not only our knees, but our hearts to him.

God's love is a boundless ocean without bottom or shore. His mercy, goodness, patience, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, are either other names of it, or its genuine and blessed effects. *His mercy is great above the heavens*: and he doth *abundantly pardon* §. *Judgment is God's strange work*, i.e. opposite, as it were, to his nature. *Fury is not in him* †. God seems to go out of himself, and personate a sinful creature, when he is angry. But the exercise of his mercy is his delight, and he counts it his dearest glory. When *Moses* said, *shew me thy glory*; God said, *I will make all my goodness to pass before thee* ||. In how much a higher sense doth that character belong to God, which *David* assumes to himself. *I am for peace*. In the original 'tis emphatical. *I peace*, or, *I (am) peace* *. God's wisdom is always busied, and his power always exerted to serve his mercy, and his mercy to serve our necessities. *God gives us richly all things*

* I do not here use *Essence* synonymously with *substance*; but in the proper metaphysical sense of the word, signifying, "That by which a thing is what it is." For in that sense, the attributes of God constitute his essence, as *solidity* or *impenetrability* is the essence of matter.

§ Psal. 108. 4. 145. 7, 8. Isa. 55. 7. † Isa. 27. 4. 28. 21.

|| Exod. 33. 18, 19. * אֲנִי-שָׁלוֹם Psal. 120. 7.

to enjoy, that pertain unto life and godliness *. The earth empties into our coffers its silver and gold: the pastures send us in cattle: the sea and rivers fish: the air fowl. We want nothing for use or delight; for food or physick. God gives us the light and warmth of the sun, *rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*; the influences of the stars, the ministration of angels; the special benefits of his grace, as well as the common bounties of his providence, the advantage of the gospel, all suitable helps for salvation, the righteousness of his son, the aids of the spirit; and the hope of his glory.

The ancients have a saying, that God was turned into love when he made the world; much rather may we say he was when he redeemed it. Or more properly may we say (not that God was turned into love (for in him there is no variableness, or the least shadow of turning †) but that he then appeared to be what he always was, and cannot but always be, *viz. infinite love*. Then the treasures of that love were unlock'd. Then *the fountains of that great deep were broken up*. We were made with a word, but we are bought with a price. In creation God gave us to our selves. In redemption he gives himself to us. All other blessings are but foils to this miraculous mercy, and unspeakably below the least instance of it.

Now, *beloved, if God so* (so early, so fervently, so seasonably, so undeservedly, so expensively, so effectually, so wonderfully) *loved us! we ought also to love one another* ||. This you see is the inference. One would have thought that the conclusion drawn from such premises, would have been that more obvious, and more seemingly proper one, *viz. we ought to love him*. This certainly follows with the highest reason. But the evangelist postpones this consequence for the present, that he might keep to the argument in hand.

* 1 Tim. 6. 17. 2 Pet. 1. 3. † Jam. 1. 17. || 1 John 4. 11.
He

He was so intent upon it, that he would not allow himself in so just and short a digression. Nay, God himself doth, as it were, over-look for a time, and in some cases and respects, our love due to him, and places it, in the effects thereof, to the account of our brethren.

Religion, divested of charity, makes a man more savage and furious, and more like the devil, than human nature is well capable of being without it: because it does, in a manner, license and sanctify the worst passions that belong to us.

Pythagoras used to say, that in two things we resemble God, *viz. In telling truth, and bestowing benefits.*

Though it must be acknowledged that the greatest love in the creature is but a drop to this ocean, but a spark to this flame, and can bear but a little better resemblance to it, than the sun drawn on a wall with a coal doth to that glorious luminary, shining in its meridian lustre, yet the small degree of likeness we can attain to (because it is still a likeness) must be as earnestly aspired after, as if we were capable of a far greater.

Let us then light our torch at this fountain, and aspire after some resemblance to our God in this lovely attribute. As it renders him infinitely amiable to the guilty creature, so let some degrees of likeness to it, render us acceptable to our creator, and profitable and delightful to our fellow-creatures.

God is more imitable in his mercy than in any other perfection. The wisdom of God is too high, his power too great, his justice too strict for us. The furthest that our saviour goes in setting us a pattern of wisdom, and innocence, is to the *serpents*, and *doves*. He doth not say be ye wise, but *merciful*, as your father is also merciful*.

Faith and hope do not make us like God, because neither of them are in him. The all-sufficient God,

* Mat. 10. 16. Luk. 6. 36.

whose *understanding is infinite*; who is the fountain of his own blessedness, and who before all worlds was the theatre of his own glory, cannot be said either to believe or hope; but he loves, yea, as hath been just said, he *is love*. The property of hope is to desire and expect; and it implies penury, insufficiency, and the absence of the thing hoped for. The property of faith is to receive, and lay hold; but of love to give and lay out.

Now you know the memorable expression of our saviour, which saint *Paul* preserved, that it *is more BLESSED to give than to receive* *. The poor receiver thinks himself happy; the bountiful giver certainly is so. The latter is the greatest gainer. For what he bestows, he *lays up in store* for himself. The advantage of the former may soon wear away; the reward of the latter *abideth*. The good deed is recorded in the high court of heaven; and will stand as a fair *item* till the great day of reckoning. It brings comfort as an immediate recompence; and it will continue (probably increase) it on the brink of the grave. Raising a great estate is but carrying a great account into the other world; which charitable expences would help to discharge. But to come to the point before us (for this may rather be referred to the preceding head of the pleasure of charity) *it is more blessed, &c. i. e.* not only because it is more delightful, or more honourable, or more advantagious, by laying others under obligations to us, or even because by *pitying and giving to the poor we lend to the Lord* †, who will certainly repay us with usury; nor meerly because 'tis doing more good, but principally, as I take the word || here to signify, because it makes us more like God, and that not only as it is a mark of greater sufficiency,

* Acts 20. 35.

† Prov. 19. 17.

|| Μακαριον εστι δίδοναι μωλλον η λαμβανειν. Μακαριος is a word often used in profane authors, to express the happiness of the Gods. When we speak of a good man deceased, whom we believe to be a saint in heaven, we say, ο Μακαρις.

and freedom, but especially as thereby we discover a greater likeness to the divine benignity. There's more of God in the temper and act, who gives to all, but receives of none. There's more of his goodness in having a heart, and more of his happiness in having a power to give.

Our love is most like God's when 'tis free and unconstrained, unself-interested, universal, constant, secret, when it is extended to the most unworthy, even our enemies, and when it is manifested in preventing our brothers sin, and hath a tendency to save his soul.

As it is one strange effect of love to make the beloved object present with us, and in despite of absence to unite us to it, so the highest and most remarkable quality of love is the power it hath of transforming lovers into the things they love, and to impress on them their qualities.

This power appeareth both in the natural and moral world. To pass by the former, 'tis evident, as to the latter, that concupiscence, or sinful love imprints in men the qualities of the things they doat upon. Experience tells us, that the *Amoroso's* become as effeminate as the objects of their caresses; that the ambitious assume the vanity of that glory they court; and the covetous become as senseless as the metal they adore.

Thus charity, or divine love, transforms holy souls into a divine image; a likeness to the object of their supreme affection. It gives us what the devil promis'd our first parents*: so that our laudable ambition may innocently obtain what a faulty pride made them insolently covet.

Though every christian grace is a distinct line of this picture; yet 'tis charity gives the perfection of colour, proportion, and feature. This is the end of

* Gen. 3. 5.

all its designs : this is the master-piece of its power : this the triumph of its glory.

Let me further press the argument upon you from this motive, *viz. To be like God will be your highest honour.*

As it is the greatest happiness, so it is the highest dignity of our nature to approach to the first and best copy after which we were formed. The excellency of every creature rises proportionably to its advance to its original. As the waters taste sweeter the nearer we drink them to the fountain-head.

We are naturally aspiring. But for the most part our ambition is faulty and foolish ; our sin and our shame : because the objects of it are mean and low ; as unworthy our pursuits, as unsatisfying to our desires. To aspire after earthly grandeur, and the applause of the vulgar, is grasping at a cloud, and seeking after *lying vanities* ; (*lying* ; because they lie to us, by deceiving us, and appearing to be that solid good, which they are not, and cannot be.)

To covet worldly pelf, and heap up riches, is embracing a dunghill. 'Tis a groveling in the dust, and with a sordid envy robbing the serpent of his food. But as to the love of heavenly things, and a conformity to God's image, in which our true felicity consists, we may retain our ambition, and aspire as high as we please. And the higher our ambition rises, the more shall we obtain, and the more honourable shall we be.

There are such enlarged desires implanted in our souls, as nothing but an infinite good can fill and satisfy : (a lesser good may possess, but it cannot *fill* us) and we act most worthily, when we act most suitably to our natures thus endow'd : which cannot be, by profusely flinging away those vast desires on meaner objects, and any created good, but by fixing them on the noblest, and most worthy ; and by endeavouring to copy out the perfections of our creator, according to the model of our present imperfect state. If we

act otherwise we not only disparage the nature of God ; but act beneath the dignity of our own. Whereas, by the method here recommended, we shall fall in with the grand design of his grace, to bring us to glory, by a way, that doth in a like manner elevate our natures, as the happiness to which it leads, and reserv'd for us, will.

When the soul that hath *escap'd the corruption of the world through lust*, and hath attained to some degree of likeness to God in his goodness as well as holiness, by putting off its savage and brutish nature in regeneration, compares its present with its former state (though it lately *lay among the pots* ; it is now become *as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold* *) what abundant honour must it perceive to be put upon it ? what a foil is the remembrance of its former loathsome deformity to that divine comeliness that now adorns it ? nothing, but the grace that bestows such a beauty, can suppress the pride, which would otherwise arise in the heart from the contemplation of it.

To be made partakers of the divine nature † (or, rather a divine or godlike † nature) (for 'tis *θεας ουσιας* without the article *της* prefixed in the Greek) is so lofty and magnificent an expression, that if it had not been an inspired phrase, it would have seemed to border on blasphemy, and to be not barely improperly but profanely applied to the souls of men (the best of which are necessarily very imperfect, and sullied with much impurity, during their abode in the body) and absolutely unapplicable even to angels ; yea, to archangels ; spirits of the highest order.

Lastly, ARG. XII. LOVE *fits us for heaven ; and is necessary to bring us thither.*

It's the capacity we carry with us to relish all its joys and glories. It's that divine sense of the soul, by which

* Psal. 68. 13. † 2 Pet. 1. 4.

it takes in the heavenly felicity. Love not only fills, but *makes* heaven. 'Tis the form, the matter (to speak in the terms of the old philosophy) and the *all* of heaven. There no selfish principles or actions have any place.

As the mutual groans of the damned will be a vast accession to their torments, so the assurance the saints will have of each others blessedness (both as to the degree and continuance) will reflect reciprocal rays of pleasure and amity, deriv'd from the same fountain of light and love.

The contemplation of God's infinite power and wisdom display'd in all his works ; especially, the admiration of his transcendent goodness (*the riches of that grace* which brought them thither) and their present experience of the profusion of his bounty, in the nearest and brightest views of his majesty, and amidst the highest and most numerous expressions of his favour, will eternally subminister, to the whole adoring society, " fresh anthems of praise, fresh raptures of love, and fresh congratulations of the common felicity.

We never read of *war in heaven*, since the first presumptuous disturbers of its peace were cast out, except once in a vision *.

As the happiness of heaven will be endless, the tenure of the saints possession being infinitely firm both by the will and power of the bestower (sure supports of its everlasting duration) so it will be perfectly pure ; free from any inharmonious allay either of plaintive sorrow, or jarring discord. There will be no noise of axes and hammers heard in the temple above, any more than there was in *Solomon's* earthly temple, by which it was gloriously typify'd.

All the heavenly harps are tuned to a full *Diapason* †. The bitter root of sorrow and strife will not

* Rev. 12. 7.

† *Δια πασων*, per omnia. A term in musick (equivalent to unison) which signifies a perfect harmony, or full chord.

grow in that chearful and well temper'd soil. There is the true *Golden Age*; there are the true *HALCYON Days*. No stormy passions ever blow in these calm and peaceable regions, which are above the reach of all tempests. This earth alone is the fruitful soil of sin and sorrow, hatred and contention. There unmix'd joys unite with perfect love. There charity and goodwill reign triumphant, and for ever.

Now, this being the case; we must take love along with us to heaven, or we may as well stay here below.

Besides the legal bar that excludes uncharitable persons from the beatifick vision, there's a moral incapacity. He that is at enmity with his brother, hath a *carnal mind*, which is *enmity against God* * also. And enmity is exclusive of all delight. For happiness is a relative thing; and doth in its own nature imply a correspondence and agreement between the faculty and the object. The finest consort of musick to one who hath no musical ear, may prove an ungrateful din. Experience tells us, that to some inharmonical, *unstrung* souls (what shall I call them?) some will hardly allow such to have souls (who alledge a currant saying in their vindication) for how can a soul hate musick which is the greatest *harmony* (*αρμονια*) (as 'tis justly called) it self? Experience, I say, assures us of this strange truth, that to some uncouth minds the sweetest strains of *Purcel's* vocal, or *Corelli's* instrumental musick may prove not only an unmoving, but a troublesome and harsh entertainment. In like manner; a man placed in the midst of the *fulness of joy* with an unsuitable mind, would be empty of the least measure of satisfaction. The rivers of pleasure at God's right hand would flow in vain to him who could not drink. What would the ocean of blifs avail to a soul which could not bath in it? All the joys with which the perfect state abounds; *such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, would be so many miseries to such a one. He would

* Rom. 8. 7.

be poor amidst the rich variety of employments he would find the angels and saints engag'd in. Instead of mingling with delight in their society and work, he would stand at a solitary distance, and either turn his back, or look askaunce upon them, with distaste and envy. In a word, such a one would be uneasy in *Abraham's bosom*, and find his hell in heaven it self.

This is a topick which our modern *English* divines have frequently and accurately handled, to shew, that the connexion between holiness and happiness is not a meer positive appointment (as the forbidding our first parents to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or the ceremonial rites injoin'd the *Jews*) of which there is no other reason but the sovereign will of God; but that the foundation of it is laid in the unchangeable nature and respect of things: and it may be well apply'd, as it hath been, as a good argument to cut off the presuming hopes of a death-bed repentance.

It may no less justly be urged in the present case. We cannot be possessed of *the inheritance with the saints in light*, without a preparatory meetness for it: and 'tis evident, that charity, as well as purity, makes a part of that meetness. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God**. The exclusion of others is peremptory and universal. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord†*, because God is holy; and the angels and saints are holy; and their employment is holy.

May we not argue with a parity of reason, *without love no man shall see that God who is love‡*; nor join himself to that society of benign spirits, whose temper is the most exalted love; and whose employment is (not only a praising, but a) loving God and one another without measure or end.

Thus reason and revelation both assure us, that as nothing unclean, so nothing unloving, can or shall enter into the *new and holy Jerusalem§*. There's no

* Mat. 5. 8. † Heb. 12. 14. ‡ 1 John 4. 8, 16. § Rev. 21. 10, 27.

going thither without a preparatory likeness of our souls to the temper and employment of the citizens. For as the happiness of sense is by an impression of pleasure from a suitable object, so the happiness of intellectual beings (with regard to their mutual converse) arises from a conformity of dispositions.

This is the foundation of that wondrous intercourse and rapturous communion, the angels and *spirits of just men made perfect*, enjoy in glory with the three persons of the ever-blessed Trinity; and that ineffably harmonious correspondence which they maintain with one another.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. Inf. *POPERY is a false and antichristian religion, because it is so void of love and charity; and not only allows but encourages persecution for conscience-sake, as one of its principles.*

We must not judge of the truth of a religion by the general *practices*, but the avowed *principles* of its professors, otherwise we must give up our common christianity; which, though so *pure and peaceable* in its principles, is yet so stained and deformed by the polluted and contentious lives of the corrupt generality who pretend cordially to embrace it; and shelter themselves under its venerable and divine name.

Nothing unbaptizes a man more than dipping himself in blood. If *Popery* be true christianity, it's of such a kind as bids defiance to its author, by despising his example, and rejecting his authority. *Popery* not only breaks the great law of christianity, but denies the obligation. The church of *Rome* puts out the eyes of those of her own communion, and tears out the hearts of those of another. Her maxims are suited to promote universal blindness or ruin; to deceive, or destroy all mankind.

Some *Romanists* have, indeed, discovered commendable degrees of candor and moderation. But at the same time that this is granted, it cannot be denied that they express'd more good nature than their very bad religion either allowed or inclined them to.

It would be an absurd supposition (how strong soever the temptation may be to make it) that they are formed in a different mould from their fellow-creatures, and their souls originally created with features unlike those of all the world besides. However, this seems evidently the truth, *viz.* that many of them, naturally, in all likelihood, of a lamb-like disposition as well as others, have been turned into wolves and tygers by their religion. The principles imbibed in their education, and sedulously infused into them by their priests, have quite spoil'd their tempers. The influence of them to this effect plainly appears to be very general. A strange religion! the more of which a person attains to, as to its grand article, the less he has of an essential grace of christianity!

In a word, *a loose Protestant lives like a brute; a devout Papist acts like a devil.*

2. *Inf. The wickedness and absurdity of persecution; seeing it is so entirely destructive of this duty of love, so peremptorily enjoined in the text; so contrary to the bright and perfect example of our Saviour; so opposite to the genius of his gospel, and the spirit and character of his faithful followers. As error doth not deserve violence to suppress it, so neither doth truth want it for its support.*

Persecution for conscience sake is wicked, not only for the reasons just mentioned, but further,

Because its anticipating the day of judgment. The Lord of the harvest, for wise ends, not subject to our ignorant censures, not only permits, but appoints the wheat and the tares to grow together till the end of it*.

* Mat. 13. 29, 30.

What arrogance, and unseasonable officiousness, then is it, for the servants to proceed to a violent and hasty separation of them? he alone hath authority to give order for the rooting out and burning the tares. What insolence is it to take his own work out of his own hands?

It's a violation of a natural and divine right. A man cannot possibly have a clearer right to any earthly possession, or the liberty of his body, than to think freely for himself in religious matters, and to act according to those thoughts, by serving God as he thinks may be most pleasing to him. For if religion be practical, and doth not rest in an idle speculation, it's equally evident, that toleration must extend to all the actions of practical conclusions, as it is that a man should be allowed to govern himself by conscience. No man needs thank another for the privilege of meer thinking as he pleases, which 'tis utterly impossible for him in the least measure to be deprived of. Only it must be granted, that the magistrate is obliged to secure the community against all who plead the prerogative of conscience to destroy it.

I call the right just mentioned a *natural* right, because it's inlaid in the frame of man's nature, *i. e.* he is not only naturally sensible of it, but naturally, and therefore strongly inclined to hold it fast, and act suitably to it: and a *divine* right because God hath not only given him a nature so furnished and disposed, but hath super-added the obligation of his own revealed will, and express command, in this respect especially, and above all others, to follow the dictates of his conscience. The necessity, as well as advantage, of acting according to this obligation, enlightens, and fills both pages of his Son's gospel.

When any therefore would deprive us of this privilege, they, at the same time, endeavour to wrest from us a natural and divine right, and deal with us as brutes, which is the greatest affront they can offer us. Whatever intimation they may give of their kind intentions

tentions to cure us of our errors, and prevent the destructive consequence of them, by such a procedure they plainly declare us both unworthy and incapable of religion.

Persecution for conscience-sake is *wicked*, because it's an usurpation of God's prerogative. "As conscience cannot be forced by any human power, so God has reserved to himself the sole command over it *." 'Tis an essential defect of power in sovereigns, though the most absolute, to make laws in matters of religion, and enforce obedience by sanguinary sanctions.

This right of judging for our selves, and acting accordingly in religion, hath both the characters of an unalienable right, *viz.* that it neither *may* nor *can* be parted with. The homage of *our spirits* is due to the *father* of them †, by a right antecedent, and far superior to any our fellow-creatures can claim, though exalted to the highest degree above us, under the title of earthly Gods. 'Tis in our keeping, but 'tis God's property. We should not only act contrary to its own nature, frustrate God's design, and disparage his wisdom in giving us a conscience, and the capacity of a private judgment, but we should rob him, as well as cheat our selves, if we parted with it, supposing it possible.

The civil properties of individuals are, no doubt, in some degrees, and in many respects, subject to the disposal of human authority, to supply the publick necessities, and promote the welfare of that community, of which we are a part, and by which we are protected. Our being members of it, and sharing the benefits of that relation, not only gives them such a right, but (though a tacit) is yet a real acknowledgment of it by us.

* King George's Letter to King Augustus, in favour of the persecuted Protestants of Poland and Lithuania, 11th Aug. 1719.

† Heb. 12. 9.

But as to the sacred inclosure of conscience, 'tis the worst kind, and highest degree of tyranny and sacrilege to break in upon it; and not to assert and defend so important a trust, and so undoubted a privilege, is the basest and most cowardly treachery †.

The other property mentioned of an unalienable right was, that (as it *may* not) so it *cannot* be taken away; which being applicable to the case in hand, makes it *absurd*, as well as *wicked*, to attempt to deprive a man of the liberty of his conscience.

Amongst many other good arguments against the doctrine of persecution, the two following (of special note) intirely overthrow it, *viz.*

1. The insufficiency of pecuniary mulcts and bodily punishments, &c. to answer the end (real or pretended) of the inflictors; *viz.* to illuminate the understanding, convince the judgment, and free the mind from the *heretical pravity*, with which it is supposed to be infected.

2. The consideration of the nature of true religion, which necessarily includes the intention and assent of the mind.

As to the first of these arguments, some Protestants ('tis true) if you'll allow them the character, certainly in this respect neither Protestants nor Christians, (yea, hardly men) have asserted both the fitness and necessity of sanguinary laws to *root* some *persuasions* out of the minds of men in order to make them peaceable, and submissive to the publick ecclesiastical establishments of the country where they live*. (By the way

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† Nullum enormius peccatum dari potest quam in conscientias imperium exercere velle. Qui enim conscientiis imperare volunt, ii arcem cœli invadunt, & plerumque terræ possessionem perdunt. *A saying of the emperor Maximilian, celebrated in many Authors.*

Of all the tyrannies on human kind,

The worst is that which persecutes the mind.

Dryden's Hind and Panther.

* That I may not offend the living by any quotations out of their sermons, or other discourses, (from whence I could cite many remarkable and

observe, that as this doctrine would oblige all to conform to the publickly establish'd religion, both as to its doctrines and practices, in *Great Britain* (the different state of these things in the northern and southern parts of the island, and the absurdity of the doctrine sufficiently deducible from that consideration alone, we at present pass by) so it equally serves to make Protestants and Christians turn *Papists*, *Mahometans*, or *Heathens*, in other countries.)

Conceive otherwise of the matter, if you can. Frame an *Idea* of a man's thinking as another would have him to gratify a kind request, or to smooth a contracted brow, or to save himself from the effect of some terrible threat; a dungeon, a gibbet, or a stake; &c. and give me the result of your attempt. I am apt to think, *Fides voluntatis*, a belief of the will, i. e. a willingness to believe (a faith the popish priests are often forced to be contented with from their converts, especially as to the grand trying article of *Transubstan-*

and bloody periods;) I shall produce only three from the dead, viz.

"No power or policy can keep men peaceable, until some persuasions are rooted out of their minds by SEVERITY OF LAWS AND PENALTIES." *Parker's Eccles. policy*, p. 145. See Dr. Owen's *Survey of it*, p. 286.

"It is certainly the duty of a prince to use his power and interest to establish the true religion in his kingdoms, to encourage the true professors of it, and to lay such restraints upon others as may be sufficient to make them consider, and bearken to wise instructions, &c." (the doctrine of persecution plainly defended in soft words.) *Some seasonable reflections on the discovery of the late plot, being a sermon preach'd on that occasion by W. Sherlock, D. D. 1683.* p. 16.

"God strikes many in their temporal concerns to promote and further them in their spiritual; and if this way fails of its designed effect; it is not from the *unfitness* of the remedy, but the invincible indisposition of the patient. God knows how to reach the soul through the body; and so do the laws of all the wise nations in the world; though our new-fashion'd politicks, I confess, contrary to them all, have cry'd down the fitness of all temporal afflictions to reduce men to a sober sense and judgment in matters of religion." *South's serm.* vol. 6. p. 324, 325. *third Edition.*

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tiation) will be the utmost you will be able to attain a notion of.

The most cruel tortures which were ever threaten'd, or which any martyrs ever suffered, cannot change one thought of the mind, whatever outward actions they may extort. The commands of the fiercest tyrants avail no more in the case than a puff of wind. The unanimous determinations of general councils, and the loudest thunders of the *Vatican*, have no more force than an unheard whisper. Like a ball struck in the open air, they make no impression; they rebound not with any conviction.

I may add, that if *oppression will make a wise man mad* *, much more one of a weak capacity. I mean, that an injurious violence will be so far from inclining the sufferer to be of the persecutor's mind, that, as it will irritate him against his person, so it will, for that very reason, prejudice him against his opinions. His person, conduct, and sentiments, will appear alike odious and absurd, from these feeling methods used to make him approve of each.

While your brother harbours a suspicion of your good-will towards him (which an harsh carriage will certainly create and confirm) he is not likely to give your reasons and advice an over-fair reception, or have an ear open to any conviction you would fasten upon him. What doth not oblige in one we love? What doth not offend in one we dislike?

The second argument I mentioned, as what cuts up by the roots the doctrine of persecution, was taken from the consideration of the nature of true religion, which necessarily includes the intention and assent of the mind.

Religion, or the service of God, being called *reasonable* †, not only teaches us, that we have the best reason to embrace and practise it our selves, but it fairly intimates, that without reason there is no religion;

* Eccles. 7. 7. † Rom. 12. 1.

and that therefore we neither ought, nor can, enforce it upon others, without appealing to their *reason*, and convincing them by it *.

Religion is a sincere spiritual service, which no force can compel to : though it may to formal hypocrisy, *viz.* a performing the external acts of religion, without a suitable inward disposition of heart ; to a *form of godliness without the power* †. If the internal, unconstrained act of the will be absent, the external acts of adoration are no true devotion. They are no better than *the sacrifice of fools*, abominable to God, and unprofitable to man. “ They can (as one well saith ||) “ with no more propriety be reckoned *worship*, than “ the accidental *fall* of a *statue* in the presence of an “ earthly monarch can be reputed *homage* paid unto “ him.” Only those *weapons* of the christian warfare, which are not carnal, can bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ §. God is a spirit, and they that worship him (truly and acceptably) must worship him in spirit and in truth. Such true worshippers the father seeketh (and such only) to worship him ¶. It is no bad definition of religion (I think) which I have met with, *viz.* “ That it is a certain perswasion in the soul with re- “ gard to God, which in the will produces that love “ and fear and reverence, which this supreme being “ justly challenges, and in the members of the body “ signs suitable to this perswasion, and this disposition “ of the will ; insomuch, that if these outward signs “ exist without that interior state of the soul which “ answers to ’em, or with such an inward state as is “ contrary to ’em, they are acts of hypocrisy and

* See the principal arguments for persecution, briefly, but sufficiently answered, in a Sermon, entitled, “ The evil and absurdity of persecution,” preach’d Nov. 5. 1718. By the Reverend Mr. Simon Browne.

† 2 Tim. 3. 5.

|| Sermon on John 18. 36, by Arthur A. Sykes, Dec. 13. 1716. page 5.

§ 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5.

¶ John 4. 23, 24.

" falshood; or impiety, and revolt againſt con-
 " ſcience*.

Some may be apt to argue thus. All trouble and pain is a means to bring perſons to conſideration. When they ſuffer for their opinions, it's certain they muſt be willing to be freed from thoſe ſufferings. And when they find, that ſtill ſticking to their old notions is the only means to prevent their deliverance, they muſt wiſh they could drop them, and be cured of their error, if it be one. Which wiſh hath a tendency to ſtir them up to make a more impartial enquiry after the grounds of their preſent opinions and practices, and more diligently to attend to every thing that carries the face of an argument againſt them.

This, ſome may ſay, is not only probable ſpeculation, but matter of fact. We need go no further than a neighbouring kingdom for numberleſs inſtances. Do we not ſee the example of the prodigal ſon frequently repeated by ſinners, whom afflictions bring at laſt to repentance, and a total change of their thoughts and actions, after all other means have proved ineffectual?

To this it may be answered,

(1.) The truth of many converſions hinted at in the objection may be juſtly doubted of. There may have been an outward comportment ſuitable to the mind of the *convertiſt*, without any inward conviction of the mind, or alteration of the judgment.

(2.) Such a real effect (if granted) is only accidental. I deny (as before) that there is any reaſon or aptitude in the nature of the thing to produce it, and demand a ſatisfactory proof of the oppoſite aſſertion, *viz.* that there is a natural tendency and ſuitableneſs in perſecution ordinarily and generally to produce ſuch an effect.

* See Bayle's Philoſoph. Comment. on Luke 14. 23. 1 Vol. ch. 2. p. 61. Engliſh Edit. 1708.

(3.) As a full answer to all this sophistry; consider, that God neither ought nor can be imitated in this respect, because man has neither the same right or power over his fellow-creatures. There is a wide difference to be made between the afflictions of *God's* providence, sent and designed for good to the sinner, and blessed for that end, and the persecutions of *men* for conscience-sake.

God's propriety in us, and sovereignty over us, gives him an undoubted title to deal with us as he pleases. And as our smallest mercies are greater, and our greatest calamities less, than our deserts, he never doth, or can injure us. Besides, as he is the *father of our spirits*, and knows what is in man, his understanding being infinite, and his wisdom founded on it, unerring, as he cannot fail of using proper means, and at a proper time, to bring about the designs of his love towards us, so his irresistible power infallibly renders them effectual, whenever he pleaseth to apply it.

But our fellow-creatures are defective, and infinitely distant from the Creator in all these attributes. None of them, though of the highest rank, clothed with the brightest earthly majesty, and armed with the utmost despotick power, that their subjects can give them, or they can exercise, have such an authority over us, or grace to bestow, like *God*, to give success to their chastisements.

Though *God* for wise and merciful ends (to say nothing of his absolute sovereignty, which renders him unaccountable to his creatures*) permits *the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous*†; yet this doth not justify them in laying it on. 'Tis evident enough, that in human affairs the desires of *men* are often employed to one end, and the will of *God* to another: that their intentions are culpable, when his cannot possibly be so.

* Job 33. 13.

† Psal. 125. 3.

3. Inf. *The self-condemnation of persecuting-protestants, whose avowed principle it is, to assert the right of private judgment ; and the sufficiency of the scriptures ; and to deny the capacity and authority of any earthly judge, infallibly, and finally, to determine the cause in religious disputes.*

What a scandalous inconsistency is it, to allow in themselves what they condemn in another? To disclaim all coercive power, and then to exercise it! justly applicable to such is the cutting exprobration of the Apostle, *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?* &c *. I may invert the order of his words elsewhere, and say, *Happy is he that alloweth not himself in that which he condemneth* †; and miserable is he that doth. How many such are to be found in the protestant world! if I were to give the account of their numbers, where should I begin or end it? 'tis surprising to consider, what progress the doctrine of *compulsion* has made, even in the christian world, though so absurd, so impious and detestable, that it may be justly said of it, what some have with little reason asserted, of the doctrine of *predestination* (rightly understood) viz. *That it is the very spunge of all religion.* It hath prevailed from the time of *Constantine*, the first christian emperor, down to the present *Charles*. It was alike practised by the *Orthodox* and the *Arians*, as they happen'd to get an *Emperor* to espouse their respective causes, and were uppermost in power. *St. Austin*, that holy and orthodox father, who, before his contest with the *Donatists*, seem'd to entertain the true christian notion of liberty and toleration, yet afterwards was so carried away both from reason and scripture by his over-eager oppositions to them, who had given him just matter of great offence, as to talk very *childishly*, and with egregious sophistry to press many texts into the service of the doctrine of persecution, to

* Rom. 2. 21, 22, 23. † Rom. 14. 22.

the bringing a great blot upon his memory, as to the defect both of his wisdom and temper; and to the furnishing the *papists* with many pretended arguments to justify their butcherly proceedings with reputed hereticks, especially some *french* bishops, and others of the inferior clergy (as appears by their writings and quotations on that subject) to vindicate the late revocation of the edict of *Nants*, by *Lewis XIV.* and all its horrid consequences*.

The first *reformers* from *Popery* were too much sower'd with this leaven. They seem not to have been fully enlighten'd with the knowledge of the heavenly doctrine of charity and mutual forbearance. Their conduct, both towards those from whose horrid corruptions of christianity they separated, and towards one another, will not bear the test if duly examined.

What unbrotherly heats were there between *Calvin*, *Luther*, *Zuinglius*, *Oecolampadius*, and other eminent witnesses of the truth, about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and other points of doctrine? What hard words, and unkind treatment passed between them. But let those who asperse the Reformation on this account, consider to what a height the dissensions arose betwixt *Paul* and *Barnabas* and *Peter*, at their first preaching the gospel; and condemn christianity for the same reason if they dare.

In the year 1535 the *papists* were handled too severely at *Geneva*, when the reformers, increased in power and authority, forbid them the exercise of their religion, and celebrating mass, on pain of imprisonment or banishment, within the short space of three days. "That their religion was idolatrous; that they were dealt with in their own coin, and old injuries retaliated, and that they had *blood given them to drink because they were worthy, &c.*" were excuses that sounded very indifferently in the mouths of chri-

* See in Bayle's philos. comment. on Luke 14. 23. part third, a full confutation of *St. Austin's* arguments on that head.

stians, who had been long taught another lesson by the doctrine and example of their lord. Some excuse, indeed, may be pleaded to lessen the guilt of those tumultuary proceedings, and unchristian violences, from the heat and disorder of mens minds, and the rising of their passions, under such sudden and wonderful revolutions which the providence of God was bringing about. But as the reformation it self is unjustly and absurdly condemned by its enemies, because of some irregular proceedings of some of the managers in the rise and progress of it, and because *Henry* the 8th was not the best of princes, and might have carnal and selfish aims in what he did in opposition to the *papal* tyranny over these kingdoms; (for did not God call *CYRUS* a Heathen, *by name*, long before he was born, to save his people †? and doth he not often delight to exercise his prerogative of bringing light out of darkness, and good out of evil :) so let us honestly, and consistently, censure a persecuting temper wheresoever we meet with it; and never think a whit the more favourably of it in a *Protestant* than in any other: let us, I say, never vindicate it in any of God's people, who, for a time, may, through remaining corruption, and the power of temptation, indulge some degrees of it, any more than *murder* or *adultery*, into which God may permit them to fall, (as in the case of *David*, the man after his own heart) to keep them more humble for the future, and more gloriously to display the sovereign efficacy of his grace in causing them to rise again by repentance, and renewing their pardon; or for some other ends worthy of himself, which we cannot pretend exactly to discover. No, let us condemn it as freely in *Protestants* as in *Turks* and *Papists*; and bewail it more sorely; because they fly in the face of their profession, and act with a self-contradiction too gross to be palliated. Who can read the history of the troubles at *Frankfort*, and the sharp contests of those who

† Isa. 45. 1 — 5.

fled from the *Marian* flames about church discipline and ceremonies, without lamenting their folly, and condemning their guilt?

If the magistrates of *Geneva*, at the instigation of *Calvin* burnt *Servetus*, shall we scruple to censure both them and him, because they acted so worthily, and with so true a zeal in many other respects; and because we justly retain a great veneration for the memory of so wise and faithful a *minister of Christ*, and so eminent a *steward of the mysteries of God* *?

In *Queen Elizabeth's* reign, and in each reign succeeding hers, down to the glorious revolution under *King William*, any one a little acquainted with the history of those times, may plainly perceive that the same *mystery of iniquity* worked more or less all along (allowing for some short intervals) both in the northern and southern parts of this island.

I verily believe, that by true history it may be made appear, that every religious sect, in their actions as a sect or body about religion, ever since the fourth century (that I may say nothing to cast a blemish on the virgin state of the church in the three first centuries) have more or less, as they had power and opportunity, violated the royal law of love, and broke in upon God's prerogative over conscience, by indulging some degrees of a persecuting temper.

The difference is not great, in some points, between *Papists*, and some (pretended) *Protestants*; who have a right to the name only by the help of a figure of speech in common use, viz. a *solecism*. The former say they never can err under the infallible guidance of a *Pope* or general Council, or both together, (for they do not perfectly agree on this head.) Some *Protestants* say they never do err, though they own they may. Whether these absurdities are of the same, or a like kind, I shall not determine. The *Papists* persecute from principle, and by rule. The *Pro-*

* 1 Cor. 4. 1.

restants persecute without either; nay, contrary to an avowed principle.

The *Papists* have their writ *de hæretico comburendo*, (i. e. for burning hereticks) and their **Inquisition** act accordingly. They have sent innumerable holy martyrs in fiery chariots to heaven. The *Protestants* have, indeed, repealed that act; though not so long ago as to brag of it. In *England*, towards the end of king *Charles* the second's reign, when the formidable approach of *Popery* made them apprehensive that they themselves might suffer by it. And in *Ireland* (if I mistake not) in the seventh year of King *William*.

Some *Protestants*, of late, have openly broached their claim to an unscriptural, inconsistent, extravagant, popish, ecclesiastical power, with which the *bishops at the head of their presbyters* † in *Utopia*, are invested; denying (in effect) that *Christ* is *King* in his own kingdom; usurping the authority that rests in him alone, and which cannot possibly be transferred to any set of meer mortal men whatever, without rendering useless the common reason of every christian, and overthrowing the whole tenour and purport of the gospel, and the establish'd method of salvation by infinite mercy and equal wisdom. And instead of enlarging *Christ's* kingdom, or making his subjects more exact in their obedience, hath a direct tendency to destroy all liberty of conscience and private judgment, and to fill the world with rapine, violence, and blood *. The defenders of this unchristian and absurd scheme of church-government, seem desirous of the return of those blessed times, when the determination of a synod could stamp truth upon doctrines, or

† See *Dr. Hare's sermon on Heb. 13. 17. and the bishop of Bangor's (now Hereford's) answer.*

* See the present controversy between the dean of *Chichester* and the bishop of *Bangor* (now of *Hereford*.) — *Dr. Hare's Sermon on Heb. 13. 17. and the said bishop's answer, and especially the representation of the committee of the lower house of convocation against the bishop; and his answer.*

deliver up the opposer to the flames. By their large demands of reverence and homage from the laity (what little care soever they take to deserve any) and the warm exercise of the small power to do mischief the laws of the land allow them, they seem to think that the *sacred character* then only preserved its dignity, when 'twas equally punishable to oppose the priests opinions, and the magistrates commands, &c.

4. Inf. *The excellency of the christian religion, which so strictly enjoyns love and charity; the practice of which is so manifestly and entirely suited to promote the general good of mankind.*

Christianity not only confirms all the obligations of natural religion; but discovers and super-adds greater. It enforces them upon stronger motives, and directs them to nobler ends.

It inspires men with all those dispositions which incline them to unity and peace, and extirpates those boisterous passions, which are the sure and constant source of enmity and division. And while *uncharitableness* depraves nature, and perverts the true ends of life, by embroiling human society; the *christian religion* plainly advances its dignity, by giving it a godlike temper; * and alone makes life desirable for the exercise of its graces; and appears to be the greatest security of government, and blessing to society both in its precepts and examples.

The Revelation of the gospel surpasseth the dimness of natural light, as it enlargeth our capacity of doing good to our fellow-creatures, and inclines our will to a compliance with a duty so profitable and delightful to our selves, as well as them.

Other religions, as *Heathenism*, *Popery*, and *Mahometanism*, either discourage the practice of holiness, or relax the necessity of it; or establish iniquity by a law.

* 2 Pet. I. 4.

But the true christian religion is equally remarkable for its *purity* and *peace*. The whole scope of it is to promote the perfection of both.

5. Inf. *The dangerous condition of uncharitable persons.*

Spiritual sins are very dangerous, for they are not so easily discerned, because seated in the mind. Persons void of this grace of charity are generally insensible of their danger, by which insensibility it is increased; for this removes them further from repentance, and consequently from forgiveness. They are committed and continued in with less remorse, because generally not apprehended so heinous as sins of a grosser kind, and which have their seat in and rise from the bodily nature. An enormous open crime, which the world brands with the greatest ignominy, may be sooner and more bitterly repented of, than a secret, uncharitable, murderous bent of soul, because the commission of it is more likely to excite an after-horror from the greater shame the transgressor is exposed to, and the greater degree of light the conscience winked against.

Besides a particular act is generally more regarded than a settled habit.

It may be justly affirmed that a smaller degree of guilt is contracted in believing there is no heaven, than that the doctrine of the church of *Rome* teaches the way to it. The disbelief of a God is a less criminal folly, than the monstrous blasphemy of making him a Devil; the author and encourager of all evil.

Might we not with as little hazard, and less inconsistency, be ignorant of the Saviour of the world, or disbelieve his offices and merits, than, while we call him *lord*, deny and disobey his authority as to this *new commandment*, we have been speaking so much of.

This duty is expressly urged, and fully explained in the gospel, and the notion of it raised to a far more sublime pitch than by natural religion, and enforced by a
more

more powerful example; so that the transgression of it will render every professor of christianity, more heinously, and inexcusably guilty.

To close this head; what more dangerous state can one be brought into, than to disobey Christ's command; despise his example; renounce the character of his disciples; be deprived of the presence of the holy spirit; be unlike God; and unfit for heaven? which, as my discourse has shown, is the dreadful condition of every person, in whose soul, malice and uncharitableness are predominant.

6. *Inf. What abundant matter of complaint and lamentation is it to see so great a defect of this grace amongst those who are so indispensibly obliged to the strictest exercise of it!*

The general prevalence of inconsiderate ignorance, and the prejudice of a narrow education, affords a just occasion of deep sorrow. What pitiful notions do the most receive from parents, tutors, or those they commonly converse with, and by reading of stinging authors! persons are not content to instill into others their own prejudicate opinions, as indisputable maxims, but they do it with such violence and heat, as often festers and rankles the mind, not only against the supposed errors, but the persons (between which we should always carefully distinguish) of all who differ from them. Besides, too many who teach truth, being themselves somewhat defective in love, do not sufficiently inculcate the necessity of their going hand in hand. Bad seed being sown in so suitable a soil as the corrupt heart of man, no wonder that it usually produces a plentiful crop. O the force of education! how justly may the most and greatest evils of life be ascribed to the perverse methods of it! and yet how strangely is it generally neglected!

Who can seriously peruse the two first of St. *John's* epistles, close the book, and lay his hand upon his heart,

heart, and yet continue in his wonted unloving frame? or attentively consider the example and precept of his lord, and yet abide in it? but the reading of the inspired writings (as well as other excellent treatises) on this subject is so little regarded by most christians, that they seem wholly unacquainted with this necessary part of knowledge (*viz.* the doctrine of *love and charity*) and lovely part of their religion.

Some indeed solicitously enquire into speculative points of divinity, that are either deep and mysterious, or plainly unknowable, or of little importance when known, having no practical influence on a good life.

Others imagine they there plainly see (because 'tis what they principally search for; an odd reason, but I fear a true one) the divine charactericks of the several *parties*, in which they are listed, and an evident proof of the orthodoxy of their respective *Jargon*.

Some can see in the bible *Peter's* primacy, and the papal supremacy, and infallibility grounded upon it; or even transubstantiation. Others (who nevertheless verbally own it as the religion of protestants) can find there the necessity of an uninterrupted succession of the christian priesthood, by bishops; metropolitan, and diocesan episcopacy, the invalidity of ordination by presbyters; and the nullity of the administrations of all such so ordain'd; coercive ecclesiastical power, and definitive authority; penal laws and tests; real sacrifice; proper altar; auricular confession; authoritative absolution; stinted impos'd liturgies, and the schism of all those who do not use them, and disown the authority that imposes them; indefeasible, hereditary right; unlimited, passive obedience †; &c. (*rare discoveries!*) but they cannot (tho' so eagle ey'd) or will not see the doctrine of universal love and charity, though it shines in every page of the gospel.

† See some account of the late inclinations to popery, by B. G. 1717.

The general pretence of all parties of making the holy scriptures the standard of their faith and duty, and a general acting contrary to such a profession; an acknowledgment in words, that it is a perfect rule, and a practical neglect of it as such, by human additions, have long been, and still are joined together (not without notorious scandal) in the christian world.

So great is the difficulty of conquering our prejudices, and thwarting the bias of a bad education, and searching after truth with an exact *equilibrium* of soul, inclin'd neither one way or other, but to meer truth it self, that very few come to the study of the scriptures, without being already strongly tinctured with the notions and particular scheme of a party; to the vindication of which, in the process of their reading, the plainest texts are wire-drawn.

Such deluded bigots being strongly possess'd that they are in the right; and that their fancies are of mighty importance; an imposing humour strangely grows upon them. They bestir themselves all in a chafe, to force them upon others. (A more ridiculous and unaccountable humour than that of putting our own clothes on every one we meet.)

Early prepossessions (like letters carv'd deep in a young tree which spread as it grows, and either late, or never wear out) abide with us, and are generally invincible. A lazy indolence finds it much easier to take things upon trust than to be at the pains of an enquiry. People by going long in the same round, have no thought of stepping out of the circle in which they seem enchanted. Their habitual stupidity is by time so confirmed, that they seldom consult their own reason, or God's word for any part of their conduct.

As some have little capacity for reflection (most of whose *ideas* seem to arise from meer sensation) so others, who are better furnish'd, will not look in upon themselves; or set their understandings at a distance

distance, and exercise the ennobling property of making them their own objects.

To these considerations it may be further added, that the most of those few who have capacity, inclination, and leisure, to examine their stock of notions, either about human, or divine things, fall into a wrong method of inquiry; or abuse a right one; or are too hasty in their decisions; whereby not only their old prejudices are confirmed, but new and worse imbibed. Their *opiniatrè* becomes excessive and intolerable. They think they have a right to set up for *oracles of reason*, and become absolute dogmatizers.

How many are the pretended, how few the real followers of the meek and humble *Jesus*! how rare the instances of love and charity, and mutual forbearance! But wrath, hatred and malice, ride triumphant and uncontrouled over two kingdoms.

Rivers of waters may well run down our eyes, while we see so few keep this royal law of love. We may well be grieved for the *hardness* of men's hearts in this respect*. Who after attentively viewing the wrinkled face of christianity abroad, and at home, through the heat of malice and contention, can stop a groan, or suppress a tear?

7. Inf. See here the true rule of judging of the truth and degrees of christianity in churches, and particular persons, under all their specious pretences.

By this shall all men know, &c. It's highly observable, that our Saviour doth not say by your knowledge; by your zealous preaching; nor meerly by a strict holiness of life; nor even by your miracles; but by your love to one another, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples.* If no love, no christianity.

That church, the very frame of whose constitution is a general and horrid uncharitableness, hath certainly a rotten, because a bloody foundation. Where the

* Mark 3. 5.

primitive spirit of love prevails most, there you may be sure is the best communion, because the nearest conformity to the gospel-pattern, which is far preferable to the strictest and most scriptural discipline, and the most decent and significant ceremonies.

So with regard to particular persons, in whomsoever we find fervent charity, and love unfeigned, (though they may differ from us in some speculative points) let us value that truly christian spirit we discover in them, more than any conformity to us in notion and opinion of those, who (if they have the *belief*) have not the *love of disciples of Christ*.

8. Inf. Lastly, *Hence infer the little reason we have to be fond of any party-names, or value the distinguishing Titles of any sects amongst christians.*

Lo here is *Christ*, say some; lo there he is, say others. *Believe it not. Go not after them, nor follow them**. I mean, be not over hasty and zealous to lift your selves into any sub-division of christians, and have your name enrolled amongst them, and take up a title you nowhere meet with in the gospel, as the *Shibboleth* of a party. 'Tis evident, that the conduct of many, in this respect, prejudices them in favour of a *name*, and stops that noble *Berean* like search into the scriptures which is the special duty of every Protestant-christian; be you satisfied with the name of *Christian*, as we may presume they of *Antioch* were, who first took up the name †. Glory only in *Christ*; let your whole and only religion be *Christianity*. Do not zealously aim to be distinguish'd from others by any thing so much as by *Holiness* and *Love*. CHRIST, you see, has told you, that by this latter he chooses to have all his followers distinguish'd. Be not therefore, in any respect, so far the *followers of men*, as in the least to detract from the far nobler character of the *disciples of Christ*.

* Mat. 24. 23—26. Luke 17. 21, 23. † Acts 11. 26.